

Infiltrator wounded while attempting to cross into Jordan

TEL AVIV (AP) — An Israeli man was lightly wounded while attempting to cross the Israeli border into Jordan, according to a statement published Sunday by the Israeli army. The statement said that Israeli army soldiers on a routine patrol Friday identified the footprints of a man leading toward the Jordanian border near the Dead Sea. After a pursuit, the man was caught. During his capture, he was shot accidentally by a bullet from one of the soldiers. The army would only identify him as an Israeli citizen. The man was subsequently transferred to a hospital for medical care, and the army is checking the circumstances of the incident.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة تصدر عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية "الرأي"

Israeli air strike on suspected Hizbollah stronghold

TYRE (AFP) — An Israeli helicopter raided a suspected stronghold of the Shiite Muslim Hizbollah guerrilla group north of the Israeli-occupied zone of southern Lebanon Sunday, police said. It dropped an air-to-ground missile close to the village of Yater near the western sector of the zone at about 8:15 p.m. (1715 GMT), they said. There were no immediate reports of casualties. The Israeli air force has made frequent strikes against southern Lebanon since a Feb. 28 roadside bombing claimed by Hizbollah killed Israel's top general in south Lebanon, Erez Gerstein. Hizbollah spearheads the fight to force Israel to withdraw completely from Lebanon.

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Israeli warplane abandoned over sea

TEL AVIV (AP) — An Israeli warplane, apparently experiencing engine failure, was abandoned by its crew over the Mediterranean sea Sunday during a flight exercise, the army spokesman said. The F-16 fighter team was rescued safely. One pilot was injured lightly, the army said. Air force officials are investigating the incident, which they suspect may be the result of engine failure. The Israeli air force announced earlier this month that they were inspecting its American-built F-16 fighter planes after engine malfunctions in the aircraft of other jets reportedly caused several crashes.

U.S. may sell 50 F-16 fighters, equipment to Israel — Pentagon

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States may sell 50 F-16 jet fighters, radar, navigation and targeting equipment to Israel, the Pentagon said in a written statement here. The U.S. Department of Defense announced "the possible sale" of the equipment to Israel on Friday, estimating the cost at two billion dollars. "This proposed sale will contribute to the foreign policy and national security of the United States by helping to improve the security of a friendly country which has been and continues to be an important force for political stability and economic progress in the Middle East," the statement read. "The proposed sale of this equipment and support will not affect the basic military balance in the region," the statement read adding, that there will be "no adverse impact on U.S. defence readiness as a result of this proposed sale."

Sheep in Egypt avoids feast day cooking pot

CAIRO (R) — A sheep to be slaughtered as part of Muslim feast day celebrations in southern Egypt opted to commit suicide instead, a newspaper said on Saturday. The animal jumped off the roof of a six-storey apartment block in the town of Nag Hammadi and died instantly, Al Jumhouriyah said, forcing the owner to make alternative plans for lunch. According to Islamic law, meat cannot be eaten unless it is killed by the ritual method. "Eid Al Adha, or the 'feast of the sacrifice,'" marks the end of the annual Hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca. It is traditional for families who can afford it to buy a sheep, slaughter it soon after morning prayers on the feast day and share the meat with friends, family and the poor.

Iran opposition group protests Khatami's Paris visit

PARIS (R) — An Iranian opposition group said on Sunday it planned a week of demonstrations in Paris to protest against Iranian President Mohammad Khatami's visit to France in mid-April. The National Council of Resistance of Iran said the protests, to be staged by Iranians living in Paris, would begin on Monday and include the families of Iranian political prisoners and of individuals killed by the Iranian authorities. A larger demonstration is planned for April 12, the group said. French and Iranian diplomats say a specific date for Khatami's visit has not yet been set. France has welcomed Iran's policy of increased openness since Khatami's election in 1997, despite internal differences in the Islamic republic.

NATO broadens attacks

Allies to target Serb tanks, troops in bid to protect Kosovo Albanians

Agencies

THE AMERICAN and allied air armada broadened its attacks on Yugoslavia on Sunday to target Serb military forces in Kosovo. The expanded bombing raised the risk to NATO pilots but also held the promise of more effective strikes at the heart of Yugoslavia's ground offensive.

The Pentagon and NATO were officially mum on what brought down an air force F-117A Stealth fighter-bomber near the Yugoslav capital on Saturday. A senior defence official, however, said there are strong indications it was hit by an SA-3 surface-to-air missile.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said no mechanical problem was reported but an explosion was heard. NATO officials, without referring to the F-117A, said SA-3 missiles were fired Saturday (see earlier story on page 4).

At NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, British Air commodore David Wilby told reporters, "We are now just beginning to transition" from focusing air attacks mainly in Yugoslavia's air defence network to targeting the Serb tanks and troops that are continuing to pound the Kosovo Albanians.

President Bill Clinton, who planned to discuss the Kosovo situation later Sunday, was greeted by a few protesters as he attended church.

The NATO air strikes were launched last week after Serbs refused to enter into a peace agreement with the majority ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.

The agreement, already signed by the ethnic Albanians, calls for NATO troops to be based in Kosovo to keep the peace.

In Belgrade, Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic met government and army leaders and declared the country fit to continue its resistance.

Tanjung news agency said the people and armed forces were linked by "strong unity, a high patriotic conscience and determination to endure in the just struggle against the criminal aggressors."

Sunday marked the 10th anniversary of Serbian constitutional changes, promoted by Milosevic, that sowed the seeds for the present crisis by stripping majority ethnic Albanians of autonomy in Kosovo province.

Yugoslav security forces clamped down violently last year on separatist moves and NATO says they have stepped up bloody reprisals against the Albanians since air strikes started on Wednesday night.

(Continued on page 12)

INSIDE

Gunmen attack U.S. embassy in Moscow

Serbs bitter over NATO raids

Kosovo refugees flee Serbs; Albania seeks aid

Pilot of downed F-117 Stealth fighter rescued



FLEEING SERB ATROCITIES: Ethnic Albanian children cross into Albania on a tractor-drawn wagon on Sunday after Serbian forces reportedly threatened to kill them if they did not leave their homes. Thousands have poured into Albania after widespread accounts of Serbian forces launching a campaign of terror in revenge for NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia (Reuters photo)

'Serbs in full-scale ethnic cleansing operations'

BRUSSELS (AFP) — Serbian army and police forces are engaged in a full-scale ethnic cleansing operation against Kosovo's ethnic Albanians, NATO said Sunday.

Spokesman Jamie Shea said the humanitarian situation in the province was "the likes of which we have not seen in Europe since the closing stages of World War II."

More than half a million Kosovar Albanians have been forced to flee their homes, he told a press conference here.

The spokesman later clarified that this total figure was for the period since violence in Kosovo erupted over a year ago.

That is more than 25 per cent of the entire population of Kosovo, and the number was "increasing at a rapid pace," Shea said.

In the last few days, he told the news conference, 50,000 ethnic Albanians "have been uprooted and are trying to seek shelter wherever they can."

Reports still to be confirmed indicated that 20,000 were fleeing fighting in the north and south

of the province and trying to get into Albania.

The Albanian government had told the Western military alliance within the past few hours that it had accepted between 8,000 and 10,000 refugees, he added.

"It seems that (Yugoslav President Slobodan) Milosevic is trying to create a new situation on the

ground, in his view irreversible, and at the same time ... trying to destabilise the entire area."

He said there were reports of ethnic cleansing in a number of areas, with Yugoslav forces apparently trying to "empty" parts of the north and also near the southern border with Macedonia.

Muslim pilgrims stone the devil

MINA (AFP) — Hurling fistful of pebbles, hundreds of thousands of Muslim pilgrims from around the world carried out the symbolic "Stoning of Satan" ritual Sunday during the feast of sacrifice.

Crying "God is Greatest," the pilgrims stoned three pillars representing the devil in Mina, near the birthplace of the Prophet Mohammad in Mecca, western Saudi Arabia.

The ritual, part of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca known as the Hajj, takes place at the site where the Prophet Abraham, his wife Hagar and their son Ishmael are said to have thrown seven stones each at the devil when he appeared before them.

Like Muslims around the world on Sunday, the pilgrims also slaughtered sheep, goats, camels and cattle as part of the feast of Al Adha (sacrifice) to mark Abraham's willingness to

sacrifice his son for God.

Last year at least 118 pilgrims died and more than 180 were injured in a stampede during the stoning on the final day of the Hajj, but Mecca Governor Prince Majed Ben Abdul Aziz said Sunday that this year's pilgrimage had been free of any major incident.

"Nothing has happened to disturb the pilgrimage this year," he said, quoted by the official SPA news agency.

But Saudi authorities said Sunday that some 86,000 pilgrims had received medical care in the last two days. They did not specify if anyone had died.

On Friday alone, when the pilgrims gathered under a scorching sun on the Arafat plain near Mecca, 68,000 people were treated at health centres and hospitals, the health ministry said.

Of these, 123 are still in hospital, according to the

ministry. Most are suffering from respiratory and heart problems.

Fifty-five people succumbed to heat stroke, one seriously, because of scorching temperatures on Friday, which reached 35 degrees Celsius.

Newspapers said the number of ill people was down this year compared to previous years because of lower-than-average temperatures, numerous sprinklers installed for pilgrims across the plain and widespread use of parasols.

"The health of the pilgrims is excellent and there are no contagious diseases," Health Minister Osama Shabkachi told the Saudi press.

He said most of the pilgrims who had been hospitalised were suffering from chronic diseases or illnesses brought on by the heat.

More than 1.7 million Muslims are taking part in this year's Hajj, with almost

650,000 Saudis being joined by more than 1.05 million pilgrims from abroad.

Meanwhile, thousands of animals were slaughtered as part of the feast, although much of the meat will be shipped to the needy among the one billion Muslims worldwide.

Saudi papers said some three million animals would be killed over the three days of the feast.

In the past, most pilgrims carried out the sacrifice themselves, but in the last decade the authorities have spent \$160 million to construct four special abattoirs that employ 20,000 personnel, including 650 veterinarians.

The pilgrims may still kill the animals themselves if they choose, but must do so in the slaughterhouses. Three look-out posts and dozens of patrols watch the area to ensure the law is not flouted.

PNA releases nine Hamas men to mark Al Adha feast

NABLUS (AFP) — The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has released nine activists in the Islamist group Hamas to mark 'Eid Al Adha, Palestinian security officials said Sunday.

Hamas sources said they expected still more militants to be released for the holiday.

The nine, from the towns of Qalqilya, Tulkarem and Nablus in the north of the West Bank, were released from Nablus's Jneid prison late Friday before the start of the feast, the officials said.

None of the men was described as a leader of the Islamist Resistance Movement (Hamas), which opposes the peace process with Israel and has claimed responsibility for suicide bombings and other attacks which have killed scores of Israelis.

When Palestinian President Yasser Arafat released several dozen prisoners belonging to Hamas and the smaller Islamic Jihad group to mark the Muslim holiday of 'Eid Al Fitr in January, Israel accused the PLA of violating peace

accords by releasing terrorists.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu used the alleged release of terrorists as further justification for his decision to suspend West Bank withdrawals called for under the terms of October Wye River agreement.

But the United States rebuffed Netanyahu and backed the PNA view that there was insufficient evidence against the released militants to warrant their continued detention.

Poll shows majority backing Lebanon withdrawal

Agencies

FOR THE first time ever, a majority of Israelis favour immediate, unilateral withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon, according to a poll published Sunday.

The poll showed 55 per cent of respondents supporting immediate, unilateral withdrawal, compared with 44 per cent in 1998 and 41 in 1997. The Jaffee Centre for Strategic Studies poll has a margin of error of three percentage points.

Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982. When it pulled out in 1985, it carved out a "security zone" in the south to protect Israel's northern border against raids by Lebanese or Palestinian guerrillas.

Protests have been mounting in Israel over

losses among the 1,500 Israeli soldiers in the zone, most of them killed by a Lebanese guerrilla group, the Iranian-backed Hizbollah.

The army maintains that Israeli casualties have been falling; nonetheless, public sensitivity has increased.

Withdrawal has become an issue in the May 17 elections, with all three major candidates promising a negotiated pullout in the near future.

Unlike most security issues, this one cuts across the traditional party lines, with some prominent doves warning that unilateral withdrawal would be a disaster and some veteran hawks among those claiming that the army could defend the border just as well from inside Israeli territory.

Those opposed to unilateral withdrawal argue that Syria, which has over 30,000 troops in Lebanon and is the real power there, will always encourage guerrilla attacks on the Israeli-Lebanese border to pressure Israel to return the Golan Heights.

Israel occupied the strategic plateau in the 1967 Mideast war. The poll was conducted between Jan. 25 and March 7. The size of the sample was 1,203.

Cycling for pullout

Meanwhile, two mothers of Israeli soldiers killed in Lebanon bicycled toward Tel Aviv Sunday on an around the country tour to campaign for an end to Israel's 21-year-old occu-

pation of south Lebanon.

Orna Shimon and Leila Parnass began their cycle tour Friday at Metulla, Israel's northernmost town on the Lebanon border, and are due to wrap up Tuesday at President Ezer Weizman's office in occupied Jerusalem.

Along the way, dozens of Israelis have joined the pair for segments of their tour in support of bringing the troops home from the buffer zone they occupy along Lebanon's southern border.

"We are trying to sound a warning so that the Lebanon issue will remain in the headlines," Shimon told reporters during an overnight stop in the coastal town of Netanya, north of Tel Aviv.

On the occasion of
Eid Al-Adha
Arab Bank is honoured to convey to
His Majesty
King Abdullah Bin Al-Hussein
and to the Arab and Islamic nations
its felicitations and best wishes



ARAB BANK

Iraqi paper calls for united front against United States

BAGHDAD (R) — An official Iraqi newspaper called on Sunday for a united front against the United States and its "imperialist" policies as NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia entered a fifth day.

The call came a day after a U.S. official reportedly warned President Saddam not to take advantage of the Yugoslav crisis and step up Iraq's military defiance to Washington.

"The continued aggression against Iraq and the current aggression on Yugoslavia should alert the international community to the necessity of taking serious measures to confront the imperialist threat," Al Thawra newspaper said.

"If efforts are not unified and there is no real, organized work, the imperialist American danger will spread and include other countries," the mouthpiece of the ruling Ba'ath Party said.

"The understanding of independence and sovereignty does not receive the necessary respect at an age when the raging American bull is unleashed on the world," Iraq has strongly condemned NATO's attacks on Yugoslavia over

Kosovo which began on Wednesday. The attacks have received wide coverage in Baghdad's official media which is usually dominated by local news.

Parallels were drawn between the Yugoslav crisis and Iraq's own confrontations with the United States. A daily has said Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic was using the same strategy as that of Saddam.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk was quoted by the London-based newspaper Al Hayat as saying that the United States was capable of dealing with any military threat he might consider during the attacks on Yugoslavia.

"If Saddam believes that we do not have the ability to face any challenge he might pose against U.S. as we are involved in handling the crisis in Kosovo, then he would be making a big mistake," Indyk was quoted on Saturday as saying.

"We have big capabilities at the stage of operations in the Middle East that are capable of facing any threats and will not be affected by what is happening in Kosovo," Indyk said.

Al Hayat said it would publish the full interview on Monday.

Iraq is enjoying a respite in its confrontations with U.S. and British warplanes over two no-fly zones as NATO pounds Yugoslavia over Kosovo.

But sources in Baghdad believe the lack of action in the skies over northern and southern Iraq in the past nine days is linked to the Muslim pilgrimage or Haj season and the Eid Al Adha feast rather than a change of policy in Baghdad or Washington.

The United States has in the past avoided attacking Iraq during holy days so as not to anger Muslims. Eid Al Adha ends on Tuesday. The last reported confrontation was on March 19 when U.S. and British jets bombed targets in what Washington said was in response to Iraqi violations of the southern no-fly zone.

The United States, Britain and France imposed the no-fly zones after the 1991 Gulf War, saying they were needed to protect Kurds in the north and Shiite Muslims in the south from Baghdad. French aircraft have since pulled out.

'Milosevic in secret deal with Saddam Hussein'

LONDON (AFP) — Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic and Iraq's Saddam Hussein have joined forces in an alliance to help them continue their defiance of Western air strikes, The Sunday Telegraph reported.

The British weekly newspaper, citing no sources, said that the two leaders had agreed a mutual assistance pact to enable them to withstand the effects of allied bombing raids on Yugoslavia and Iraq.

The alliance was sealed shortly before NATO last week launched Operation Allied Force against Yugoslavia, when a delegation of Serbian military experts visited Baghdad earlier this month, it added.

According to the newspaper, Milosevic has agreed to help Saddam Hussein shoot down allied aircraft involved in bombing raids against Iraq.

In return for receiving Serb assistance in rebuilding Iraq's air defences and making its jet fighters airworthy, Baghdad has promised to provide Belgrade with oil and cash to sustain Serbia's battered economy, it said.

The Sunday Telegraph quoted a spokesman from the British Foreign Office as saying: "We are aware of the reports that there is a connection between the Iraqi and Serbian regimes. We believe that they are accurate and based on good information."

"Obviously this is a cause for concern and demonstrates the sort of company that Milosevic is now keeping."

The Serb delegation earlier this month was led by Lieutenant-General Jovan Djukovic, Serbia's deputy defence minister. It followed an earlier visit on March 9 by a Serb chemical and biological weapons expert, Ivan Ivanovich, said the newspaper.

It quoted an unidentified senior diplomat as saying: "It appears that they have identified a common aim to shoot down allied aircraft. Saddam and Milosevic see each other as international outcasts who must support each other if they are to survive."



A Muslim woman holds a holy book in her hand as she is participating in the third day of the Haj ceremony in Mina, 10 kms north of Mecca on Sunday (AP photo)

'PNA must meet commitments before withdrawal'

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — In a sharp change of emphasis, a U.S. official said Sunday that Israel does not have to resume troop withdrawals in the West Bank until the Palestinians meet their commitments under the Wye agreement.

U.S. embassy spokesman Larry Schwartz stressed that the United States still expects Israel to unfreeze other aspects of the U.S.-brokered Wye River accords.

Until recently, Washington had blamed Israel for the current deadlock in the peace process, saying the Palestinians have gone a long way towards fulfilling their obligations.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu froze Wye River in December, accusing the Palestinians of failing to contain anti-Israel violence.

"If you read the Wye agreement you see that the hand over of territory is the last step, and that other conditions have to be met first by the Palestinians," said Schwartz.

The conditions Schwartz listed include the collection of weapons from Palestinian opposition groups such as Hamas; the prosecution and imprisonment of militants who have killed Israelis since the Oslo accords; and consistent cooperation with Israel in

prevention of suicide bombings and other attacks against Israelis. "We have to make sure that there is no revolving door."

Schwartz told the Associated Press, using Netanyahu's term for what he says is a Palestinian policy of arresting then releasing militants.

Israel must also fulfil its other Wye commitments without delay, he said.

These include release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails; opening the "safe passage" for Palestinians between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank; and allowing a seaport to be opened in Gaza City.

118 journalists imprisoned in 25 countries, new CPJ report shows

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reported last week in its annual world-wide study of press freedom that at least 118 journalists were in prison in 25 countries at the end of 1998, and 24 journalists in 17 countries were murdered during the year in reprisal for their reporting, a CPJ statement said.

CPJ released the 400-page Attacks on the Press in 1998, the 12th in the series, at a news conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. on Thursday. The book contains analyses of press freedom issues in 118 countries, four special reports, and compelling accounts of 500 attacks aimed to intimidate and silence journalists and news organizations through assault, wrongful imprisonment, censorship, and legal harassment.

Among ominous trends of 1998 noted in CPJ's report around the world were the explosion of violence against journalists in war-

torn Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and onerous new press laws in Jordan and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Colombia, where 43 journalists were murdered in the past 10 years, was the most lethal country for journalists, CPJ confirmed the assassination of four journalists, targets of ongoing civil war and pervasive criminal violence, and continues to investigate murders of five other Colombian journalists.

For the fifth consecutive year, Turkey held more journalists in prison than any other country, 27, down from 29 in 1997. Many are victims of the government's continued criminalization of reporting on the 14-year-old conflict with Kurdish insurgents in Turkey's southeast.

China and Ethiopia each held 12 journalists in prison at year's end. One of the newly imprisoned in China was jailed for sharing e-mail addresses with a dissident online magazine. Ethiopia persisted in flout-

ing the rule of law by jailing journalists on unspecified charges.

Increasingly, laws banning critical reporting are

subjects of CPJ campaigns and recipients of CPJ International Press Freedom Awards — Chris Anyanwu of Nigeria, Doan Viet Hoat

Bangladesh Burkina Faso, Canada, Congo, Ethiopia, Georgia, Philippines, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Thailand. CPJ continues to investigate the deaths of 12 other journalists where there is reason to suspect the killings were in retribution for the journalists' work.

The book includes a chart of the more than 470 murders of journalists in the past 10 years by region and country. In Nigeria, where the June death of military ruler Gen. Sani Abacha brought long-awaited freedom in 1998 to all but one of 17 imprisoned journalists, unease persists that press freedom cannot be achieved without the repeal of laws used to punish journalists who criticize government officials.

In Algeria, embroiled since 1992 in brutal civil conflict with Islamic extremists, the assassination campaign that claimed the lives of at least 58 journalists between 1993 and 1996 has left a press diminished in number and dependent on state protection. In Peru, a scare campaign against a reporter

who revealed that the army was wiretapping phones of journalists and government opponents led to a united effort by international journalist groups to confront President Alberto K. Fujimori and an improvement of conditions for Peruvian journalists. In Indonesia, the fall of President Suharto, triggered by Asia's economic downturn, nationwide protests, and international pressure, led to a lifting of almost all restrictions on the press by B.J. Habibie, his hand-picked successor.

Of the 25 countries at year's end holding journalists in prison, the third highest in number was Sierra Leone with 11, Burma and Syria each held 8, Peru 5, Cuba 4, and Gabon 3. Countries with two imprisoned each were Algeria, Benin, Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Russia, South Korea, Togo and Tunisia. CPJ documented one imprisoned in each of Cameroon, Iraq, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

Sylvia Poggioli, senior

correspondent in Europe for National Public Radio, wrote the book's preface. She deplores "the incredibly high price the press has paid in the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia," where state-run media fomented ethnic hatred that led to the Croatian and Bosnian wars and then to Kosovo. "What makes ill-treatment of the media in the former Yugoslavia particularly disturbing," she writes, "is that this region has been the object of intense diplomatic involvement and scrutiny by the international community, yet Western diplomacy has focused mainly on regional stability at the expense of freedom of information and free speech."

Four reports by CPJ's regional specialists focus attention on leading indicators for press freedom worldwide:

• Nigeria — "Outliving Abacha, Six Nigerian Journalists' Prison Stories" points out that systemic change is needed to restore press freedom in Nigeria

and presents the vivid personal accounts of six journalists who endured brutal imprisonment under the Abacha regime.

• Latin America — "Banding Together" recounts how, with the help of CPJ and other international press organizations, newly empowered journalists in Peru, Argentina, Colombia, Brazil, Guatemala, and Mexico are uniting to protest abuses against the press.

• Asia — "Freedom Takes Hold: ASEAN Journalism in Transition" pinpoints how journalists in Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia allied to monitor press freedom conditions in the region.

• Algeria — "Siege Mentality: Press Freedom and the Algerian Conflict" reports on CPJ's fact-finding mission to the country where journalists have long feared for their lives.

The Committee to Protect Journalists is an independent, non-profit organization that seeks to safeguard press freedom worldwide.

14 journalists murdered in 98; killings of two others under investigation

becoming the favoured weapons against independent journalism. "With more countries wielding insult laws and criminal libel statutes to muzzle expression, more journalists than ever face a stark choice: Exercise self-censorship or risk going to jail for hard-hitting reporting," said Ann K. Cooper, CPJ's executive director, in the book's introduction.

Three journalists freed from prison in 1998 were

of Vietnam, and Ruth Simon of Eritrea.

At least 24 journalists were killed as a direct result of their professional work in 17 countries during the year. In addition to the Colombia murders, two journalists were murdered for their work in each of four countries — Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria, and Russia. Assassination claimed the life of a journalist in each of 12 other countries — Afghanistan, Angola,

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PROGRAMME TWO

19:00Le Journal
19:15Extra Large
19:30News headline
19:33Los Invencibles de la Vie
20:00Worldnet
20:30Serie - Entre Terre et Mer
21:15Filler & Encounter
22:00News in English
22:30FX

PRAYER TIMES

04:06Fajr
05:24Sunrise) Doha
11:40Dhuhr
15:11Asr
17:56Maghreb
19:14Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811.
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751.
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Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
Day Saints Tel. 4651932
St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel.
4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifeh
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The United Catholic Church
Tel. 4624757
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Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4892679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church
4771331
The Armenian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department
of Meteorology
Temperatures are expected to rise
slightly. Clouds will appear at different
altitudes, and winds south-
westerly moderate to active. In
Aqaba, it will be warm, winds
northerly moderate, and seas
calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman07/24
Aqaba15/30

Deserts05/26
Jordan Valley14/29
Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 20 Aqaba 26 Humidity
readings: Amman 22 per cent.
Aqaba 31 per cent.

Following are the temperatures
expected today in the following
areas:
Ajloun10/20
Jerash16/25
Um Qays14/24
Madaba15/26
Petra14/27
Dead Sea11/31

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Abbas Al Hakim4885446
Dr. Arafat Ashhab5602507
Dr. Ayman Al Muhtaseb4875748
Dr. Jamal Jharah5347351

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy5537004
Ruba Al Dawa Pharmacy5536169

IRBID:
Dr. Mohammad Al Shari (02)7100588

Fou'ad Pharmacy(02)275360
ZARQA:
Dr. Mazen Saffarini(05)985832
Palestine Pharmacy(05)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111
Civil Defence Department5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue
Malhas, J. Amman4636140
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police192, 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade4617101
Blood Bank4775121
Highway Police5343402
Traffic Police4896390
Public Security Dept.4630321
Hotel Complaints5605800
Price Complaints5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints
4787111
Telephone Information (directory
assistance)121
Overseas Calls0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs
4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs5661101
Jordan Television4773111
Radio Jordan4774111
Water Authority5680100
J. Electricity Authority5815615
Electric Power
Co.4636381
RJ Flight Information44-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special
Surgery5921199
The Islamic Abdl5661317
Hussein Medical Centre5858586
Luzmila4630195
Khalidi Maternity46428106
Alkhalid Maternity46424412
Jabal Amman Maternity4642362
Malhas, J. Amman4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani5607071
Jordan Hospital5607530
Shmeisani Hospital5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital5667279
University Hospital5675500
Al-Ahli, Abdali56641646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen47710103
Al-Bashir477511126
Army, Marka489161115
Queen Alia Hospital5157100
Amal Hospital5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre5353000
Jerusalem Hospital4387181

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital(05)983323
Zarqa National Hospital(05)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital(05)986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital
.....(05)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital(02)75555
Roman Catholic Hospital(02)72275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital

(02)7101372, (02)7103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital
.....(02)7102831, (02)7102011
Speciality Hospital(02)7103100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital(03)2014111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

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Royal Jordanian (RJ) Information
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(44)53200-5, where it should
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other flights can be supplied on
phone 44 (52700). Information on
Royal Wings flights can be supplied
on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:05Sanaa (RJ)
07:30Damascus (RJ)
08:30Jeddah (RJ)
09:20Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
09:25Beirut (RJ)
09:30New Delhi (RJ)
16:05Cairo (RJ)
16:30London (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:55Kuwait (RJ)

18:40Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
20:15Bangkok, Doha (RJ)
23:15Tel Aviv (RJ)
03:45 Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok (RJ)

Other Flights

04:10London (BA)
08:20Alexandria (BA)
09:30Cairo (MS)
10:00Khartoum (SD)
11:30Sanaa (IY)
12:45Kiev (6U)
13:20Bahrain (GF)
14:45Doha (QR)
15:05Vienna (OS)
15:25Dubai, Abu Dhabi (EK)
17:50Istanbul (SD)
18:40Beirut (ME)
20:05Tel Aviv (LY)
20:30 Frankfurt, Damascus (LH)
01:25Athens (OA)
02:00Milan (AZ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Wings (RW)
08:50Aqaba (arriving at QAIA)
17:30 Gaza (arriving at QAIA)
(RW)
18:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka
Airport)
23:15 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA)
(RW)
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

05:35Beirut (RJ)
10:35Frankfurt, London (RJ)
11:20 Shannon, Chicago (RJ)
12:00Kuwait (RJ)
12:15Cairo (RJ)
20:40Damascus (RJ)
20:45 Abu Dhabi, Tehran (RJ)
21:00Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
21:00Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
21:05Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
22:45Sanaa (RJ)

Other Flights

04:45Alexandria (BA)
06:00Istanbul (TK)
07:25Paris (AF)
09:05London (BA)
10:30Cairo (MS)
11:05Istanbul (SD)
12:30Paris (IY)
14:00Kiev (6U)
14:10Bahrain (GF)
15:35Doha (QR)
15:50Vienna (OS)
16:30Dubai (EK)
18:50Khartoum (SD)
20:00Beirut (ME)
20:50Tel Aviv (LY)
02:45Athens (OA)
03:00Milan (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport)
(RW)
13:30 Gaza (from Marka Airport)
(RW)
20:30Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)
21:00Tel Aviv (from QAIA) (RW)



HIS MAJESTY King Abdullah joined worshippers at prayers held in the Royal Guards Mosque at the Royal Palaces' compound. Accompanying the King were HRH Prince Hassan, other members of the Royal family and Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh, the speakers of Parliament, the King's advisers, Cabinet members, the chief of the Royal Court, heads of the security services, prominent public figures and high ranking army officers. After the prayers the King visited the grave of the late King Hussein where he recited verses from the Holy Koran. He later visited the tombs of the late King Abdullah, King Talal and Queen Zein (Petra photo)

Prince Hamzah celebrates 19th birthday today

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Crown Prince Hamzah Ben Al Hussein, who is currently studying at Britain's Sandhurst Military Academy celebrates his 19th birthday today.

Born in Amman on March 29, 1980, Prince Hamzah, is the eldest of the late King Hussein's four children from his marriage to Her Majesty Queen Noor. The Crown Prince received his early education at Amman's International Baccalaureate School. He went on to England to earn his general certificate for secondary education at Harrow.

He also attended various military training courses on para-trooping wings, counter terrorism, special forces and standard infantry and is Jordan Armed Forces sniper qualified.

He often accompanied his father, the late King Hussein, on foreign visits and attended numerous pan-Arab and international conferences in King Hussein's company.

Prince Hamzah's interests include fencing, scuba diving, shooting, judo, fishing, skiing, water sports and flying.



He also won numerous religious prizes, including the "Dome of the Rock" Award by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in 1990 and a history prize from Harrow. Prince Hamzah has been decorated with the Al Hussein Gold Medal for Achievement and Urdum Al Khawkab Al Urduni.

Prince Hamzah was designated Crown Prince in accordance with a Royal Decree issued on Feb. 7, 1999.

Trade ministry plans quality management award for industrial, services sectors

By Suha Ma'ayah

AMMAN — The Ministry of Trade and Industry has finalised a blueprint for the first Jordanian award to promote quality awareness in the industrial and services sectors in the country.

The Jordan Quality Award for Total Quality Management (TQM) is a set of guiding principles for the continuous improvement of Jordan's industries to achieve customer satisfaction.

Ahmad Hindawi, director of the Industrial Development Directorate (IDD) at the ministry, who prepared the award, said applying the TQM concept will enable the country's organisations to perform uniquely.

"We hope spreading TQM awareness to the industrial and services sectors will strengthen competitiveness among organisations," Hindawi told the Jordan Times.

Manufacturing companies, service companies, small and medium businesses, and public institutions can apply for the award.

"Boosting the competitiveness of the industrial sector as a whole will result in sustainable development and better living standards," Hindawi added.

Eligible institutions must be majority Jordanian owned and demonstrate promising financial performance. Tobacco and alcohol companies, suppliers of products for military purposes, and charitable and religious institutions cannot qualify for the award.

"Developed countries

apply the TQM concept, but Jordan lags behind," said Widad Qeishat, an industrial engineer who helped Hindawi prepare the award.

Jordanian officials were highly upbeat about the possibility of Jordan's accession to the World Trade Organisation before the year 2000.

Jordan has also signed a partnership agreement with the European Union aimed at creating a free trade area by the year 2010.

"Spreading TQM awareness will enhance the quality of work, be it in an educational institution or on a ministerial level," she stressed.

Participants will be assessed mainly on their strategic planning, leadership skills, approach in utilising human resources, and upgrading their information resources.

For example, an employer might be assessed on how decentralisation is applied in the field and to what extent the employees follow and benefit from training programmes, Qeishat said.

"Successful candidates will receive a TQM certificate," she added.

The Jordan-U.S. Business Partnership, a U.S. non-governmental organisation, will help the IDD introduce the award by offering technical assistance in awareness programmes, staff training, evaluation and assessment of eligible candidates.

A financial reward is still under study, said Qeishat who is also a coordinator of Jordan's partnership project at the trade ministry.

Government announces aid package for farmers caught in water crisis

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government has announced the creation of a JD12-15 million fund to facilitate Jordanian farmers and livestock breeders in overcoming the consequences of the drought in the Kingdom.

The announcement was made by Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh who said His Majesty King Abdullah had issued directives in this respect. He said the government-appointed drought committee that met under his chairmanship is taking measures to carry out the directives.

The decision followed demands from Lower House deputies that the government provide assistance to farmers suffering from the drought.

Rawabdeh said the government realises that agriculture is a pillar of the national economy and that it is facing enormous difficulties. He said the financial aid will be disbursed as grants rather than loans.

Following is the text of the government's decision, announced after the last Cabinet meeting held before the 'Eid Al Adha holidays:

1. To make available fodder available to livestock breeders at nominal prices. This will include barley sold in

bulk at JD75 a tonne and bran at JD65 a tonne.

2. To exempt farmers from 50 per cent of the interest on loans obtained from the Agricultural Credit Corporation (ACC) for 1999 and to reschedule the remaining 50 per cent.

3. To provide farmers with vaccines and veterinary supplies and transport for using them.

4. To continue to purchase field crops from local producers.

5. To make available sufficient water free of charge for livestock. The water will be drawn from desert wells throughout the duration of the drought.

6. To provide farmers with pesticides. The Ministry of Agriculture will be responsible for spraying fields.

7. The livestock census conducted earlier this year will not be taken into consideration, and livestock breeders will receive facilities in obtaining loans from the ACC.

8. The Minister of Interior will form a committee to investigate any excesses reported during the sheep census and will hold accountable those responsible for the excesses.

Earlier this month the government also announced that state grazing reserves will be open to the livestock.

Opposition blasts Israel over water dispute

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan's 13 opposition parties blasted Israel for its decision to cut water supplies pumped to Jordan from Lake Tiberias in accordance with the 1994 peace treaty.

They called on the government to terminate the deal and find a solution to the Kingdom's chronic water shortage.

In a written statement, the Higher Committee for Coordination Among Opposition Parties said it was not surprised by the Jewish state's decision, which "threatens local water security, because Jordanians and opposition parties are aware of the Zionists' greed for our water, land and skies."

"The [Israeli] aggressive decision revealed the weakness of Jordanian officials' claims that the Wadi Araba treaty will reclaim [our] land and water," said the statement.

Two weeks ago, Jordan rejected an Israeli request to reduce water amounts agreed to in the peace treaty by 40 per cent due to a regional drought.

The parties said they demand Jordan's legitimate rights, stressing that the "Zionist enemy has no right to any drop of water, from the Jordan River's tributaries, Palestine or Lebanon."

They called on citizens to intensify efforts to confront "this dangerous problem" by demanding that the government freeze the peace treaty and cancel it.

Under the treaty, Israel extracts 120mcm of water from the Yarmouk River in summer, and Jordan uses the rest. In winter, Israel takes 33mcm from the river, of which 20mcm are stored for Jordan in Lake Tiberias for the Kingdom's use in summer.

Israel said it was not able to collect the 20mcm from the Yarmouk last winter because of a regional drought.

The opposition also requested the government find solutions to fend off water shortage and cooperate with Arab neighbouring countries to "unchain" their water policies from "Zionist plans aimed at depleting Arab water resources."

The government will declare its contingency plan to cope with the drought, the worst in 50 years, on April 1. Bringing 1,650 privately-owned wells under government control, rationing water supplies and possibly banning some crops of high water consumption are the plan's main objectives, according to officials.

More than 2,000 Jordanians study in U.S. each year — study

AMMAN (J.T.) — Around 2,094 Jordanian students were registered at U.S. universities for the academic year 1996-1997, according to a press release issued by the American Universities Admission Programme this week.

The scholastic organisation, which helps foreign students enter American universities, also said 49 per cent of all Jordanian students were attending graduate studies, 46.8 per cent were enrolled in undergraduate studies and 4.2 per cent were mostly following English as a second language courses.

Their major fields of study were engineering (33.8 per cent), business (13.5 per cent), maths & computer science (9.2 per cent), added the press release.

As the American system is very diverse because of private and public universities, the tuition costs vary from \$5,000 a

year to \$21,000 a year, while the total expenditures, including on-campus housing, food and tuition could range between \$10,000 to \$31,000, a year.

According to the press release, a total of 141 Jordanian professors were teaching at U.S. universities during the same year.

The press release added that American universities attract 32 per cent of students not studying in their country of origin.

"We will not compare two different systems of higher education."

The American Universities Admission Programme is an American-based institution made of 39 directors of admission and university professors specialised in higher education. It is the largest organisation of this type in the world.

Egyptian editor discusses Arab role in New World Order

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — Democracy, economic progress and liberalisation of civil institutions in the Arab World are the touchstone for Arabs to respond to the New World Order. Usama Gazali, chief editor of Al Siyaseh magazine in Egypt, said Wednesday.

"The expression 'the New World Order' began appearing in the early 1990s during preparations to strike Iraq," Gazali said during a lecture organised by the Abdul Hamid Shoman Foundation entitled "The International Political changes and its effect on the Arab World."

"The strikes on Iraq and what followed proves that the Arab region is a mere reflection of the embodiment of the New World Order," he said.

Gazali, a member of Egypt's Al Shura Council, overruled the changes the world has witnessed, starting with the trend of globalisation, which coincides with the frequent break-aways and separations in different parts of the world.

He said the other change is economic and political liberalisation which followed in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

He added that the last, and maybe the most dangerous, change in the world has been the formation of economic blocks.

"The European economic block is a strong indication of the seriousness of competition in the world market," he added.

"The increase in population in the Arab World is a strong factor by which it can respond to global change," he said, commenting on the Arab's ability to cope with those changes.

By the middle of the next century, Jordan's population could reach as much as 17 million, while Egypt's population could reach up to 120 million, and Syria and Iraq 50 million people, according to U.N. studies.

"Other factors determining the Arabs' ability to respond to change include political instability, the technological gap between the Arab and the Western worlds as well as the problem of water and petroleum."

The lecturer argued that the Middle East is the most likely region to witness war over natural resources, namely water.

The politician argued that the Arab World can respond to the New World Order either by isolating itself from the rest of the world, melting under the tutelage of other nations, or by interacting positively based on maintaining basic morals and self-confidence.

By Francesca Ciriaci

IRBID — Dalia Ben Ari has been working for 25 years as a journalist, and her keenness on the many important but too often overlooked "stories behind the news" has taken her to the most disparate spots in the world for mass circulation Israeli publications.

"But days like this make me sure I will never grow tired of this business," she said last Tuesday, at the end of her first and brief visit to Jordan. "[Days] when I feel I do something good for somebody through my job."

Dalia came here to settle a very old score. Back home, she had been approached by a lady with a large silver medal bearing the Hashemite coat of arms, a ribbon of the Jordanian national colours so consumed it would disintegrate at a mere touch.

The lady's husband was an army driver on a fateful



day in June 1967, when Israeli forces occupied the headquarters of the Arab Jordanian Army in the West Bank town of Ramallah. The driver found the shiny Al Nadha Medal of the Third Order on the floor. Amidst the commotion of one of the bloody days of that war, he picked

it up and took it home.

He and his wife swore that one day they would return it to the unknown honoree, and 32 years they did just that through Dalia, who arrived here on her mission last Monday evening. Dalia succeeded with that bit of luck that usually assists the tena-

cious. By Tuesday morning the old medal once again adorned the chest of (Ret.) General Mohammad Ahmad Salim Bataineh, former commander of the Jordanian forces in the West Bank.

Gen. Bataineh, a tall, strongly built 78-year-old enjoying a well-deserved

rest in his hometown of Irbid after decades of military and civil service, nodded in surprise when he opened the small jewel box and saw one of many medals that King Hussein had bestowed upon him.

"War is war. It means killings and bloodshed... and that was war," he said almost to himself, recalling the 10,000 dead in the West Bank in 1967.

On Oct. 24, 1994, at the signing of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty in Wadi Araba, Gen. Bataineh stood behind the great leaders on the podium. He shook hands with the Israeli general who commanded the military operation in 1967.

"Of course I was happy, peace is always better than war," he commented.

Through Dalia, he sent to the Israeli soldier who returned the medal to him a brief, heartfelt message in return: "Tell him that I thank him, and that he is a

good and honest man. He will always be welcome in my house."

But when asked whether he would go to Israel, the old general politely declined.

"It is not time yet," he said trying to hide behind a respectful smile the same frustration that troubles many on both sides of the river.

Dalia brought back with her to Tel Aviv the smell and taste of Jordanian food, the straight look of the blue eyes of Gen. Bataineh, his few words, and lots of photographs for her editor at La'isha, the weekly magazine of the popular Yediot Ahronot daily.

An old, bitter story came to an end. Other stories out there still await a conclusion.

WHAT'S GOING ON

LECTURE

• "The Poetry of Thomas Hardy" by Dr. Nicholas Linfield at the British Council, Jabal Amman at 5:00 p.m.

PLAY

• Comedy entitled "A Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed" at Al Thurayah Hall, Village of Tayibat (Tel. 4380631, 4655585), (daily at 9:00 a.m.).

FILM

• "U.S. Marshals" at Books@Café, Jabal Amman, on Tuesday, March 30 at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 45604578).

EXHIBITIONS

• "Amman... A Meeting Point" by Swedish artists Ann Edholm and Hakan Rhenberg at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists, until April 22.

• Works on paper by Russian artist Yuri Pestov entitled "Al Ferdouse, the Rose Garden" at the Jordanian Plastic Artists Association, Jabal Weibdeh, until March 31. (Tel. 4623297).

Gunmen attack U.S. embassy in Moscow

MOSCOW (AFP) — Anti-NATO sentiments boiled over in Moscow Sunday when the U.S. embassy was hit by gunfire during a shootout between police and masked gunmen who attempted to launch grenades at the building.

The stunning broad daylight attack took place on one of the Russian capital's main streets while several hundred protesters were picketing the embassy to protest the Washington-led air assault on Yugoslavia.

Eleven bullets hit the upper floors of the yellow and white stucco building, according to NTV television which captured the dramatic attack on tape. No injuries were reported.

The Russian foreign ministry in a statement expressed regret to Washington over the incident. It marked the second time in four years that gunmen had fired on the building in protest at NATO action in Yugoslavia.

Security at all the NATO-member embassies was stepped up following the attack, which was labelled as a "political" act by the Russian interior ministry.

NTV footage showed masked gunmen in camouflage and armed with Kalashnikov rifles jump out of a white jeep and try

to launch two grenades from shoulder-mounted launchers.

The launchers failed to work.

A gunfight ensued after police protecting the embassy compound opened fire as heavy automobile traffic passed by on the street. The anti-NATO protesters dived to the ground to avoid the bullets.

Two grenade launchers were abandoned at the scene. The gunmen continued firing on the embassy building as they drove off in their jeep, which was later discovered on one of central Moscow's side roads.

President Boris Yeltsin ordered Interior Minister Sergei Stepashin to lead an investigation into the shooting.

Police have imposed a state of heightened alert in the Russian capital. Interfax reported. But it could not confirm an earlier NTV television report that three suspects for the embassy attack had been arrested.

The attack came as some 500 demonstrators were protesting for the fourth consecutive day outside the embassy compound against NATO air strikes on Yugoslavia.

The same embassy building was also hit by a grenade in 1995 following NATO attacks against

during the Bosnian war. No one was hurt in that incident.

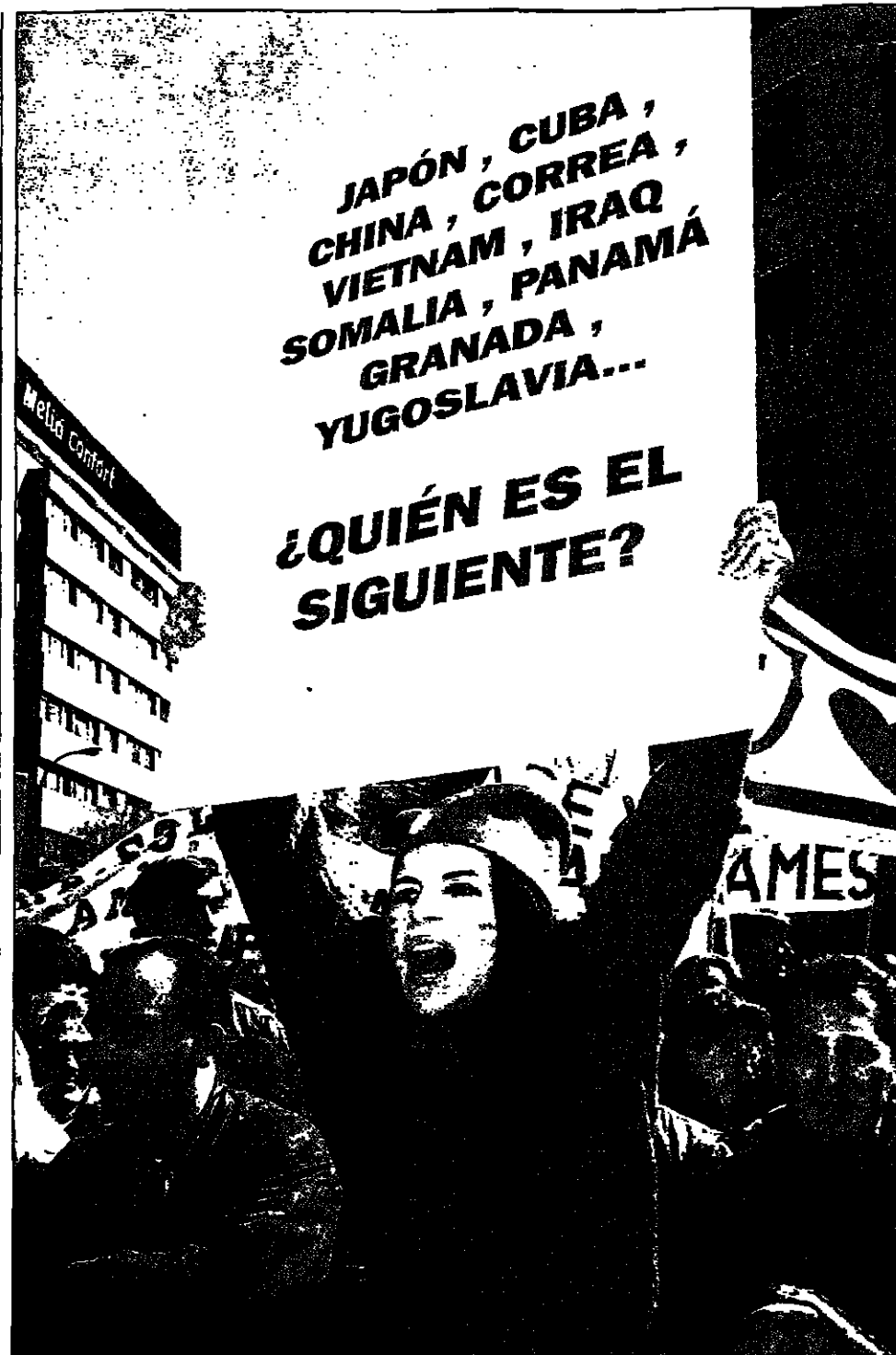
Russia has been furiously opposed to NATO strikes and has broken off relations with the western military alliance. The NATO envoy in Moscow, Alexis Chahatinsky, was expelled from Russia on Saturday.

Moscow has further warned it could offer Belgrade unspecified aid if the attacks continue. There were reports that Russia had offered to represent Yugoslav interests in Britain, France, Germany and the United States.

Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov implied Saturday that Moscow could break the arms embargo on Yugoslavia, saying: "Those who have perpetrated the act of aggression themselves have drawn a line" through all U.N. resolutions concerning the former Yugoslavia, including the embargo.

The Russian parliament, meanwhile, has decided to postpone a scheduled vote on the START II nuclear arms reduction treaty sought by the United States.

Moscow has also cancelled a visit by Pentagon experts to discuss dismantling Russia's ageing nuclear facilities.



A young woman holds a placard reading 'Japan, Cuba, China, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Somalia, Panama, Granada, Yugoslavia... who will be the next one?', during a demonstration outside the U.S. embassy March 28, 1999, in Madrid. They were protesting against air strikes in Yugoslavia (AFP photo)

Kosovo refugees flee Serbs; Albania seeks aid

KUKES, Albania (R) — Ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo poured into Albania in their thousands on Sunday after being driven out by Serbian forces retaliating for NATO air strikes.

In the capital, Tirana, the government urged the international community to help end what it called "this unprecedented genocide on the civil population" in Kosovo, and a special committee appealed for gifts of medicine and food.

A steady stream of exhausted refugees, bringing tractors, horses and other belongings, was crossing the border at Morina, near Kukes, some 250 km north of Tirana.

"The Serbs told us we had one hour to leave Kosovo," one man said. Two kilometers away smoke billowed from the burning houses of Dobrush, a Kosovo village burned by the Serbian forces.

Kukes, a city of 20,000 set in the scenic mountains of northern Albania, was crowded with refugees parking tractors wherever they could, and it was hard to estimate their numbers.

The Albanian news agency ATA said 1,500 Kosovo Albanians had

crossed the border at Morina in the morning after Serbian border guards reopened the crossing point, which they had shut during the night.

Many refugees had tears in their eyes. Even tough men not accustomed to showing their emotions cried openly and spoke of the violence of the Serbian forces.

The people of Kukes welcomed their eastern brethren with open arms and some homes offered shelter to up to 20 people on Saturday night when the first big wave of refugees arrived.

The Albanian information ministry said around 20,000 refugees had streamed into Albania on Saturday after Serbian forces responded to the NATO air strikes by stepping up their attacks on ethnic Albanian villages in Kosovo.

The Tirana office of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) disputed this figure, quoting its own monitors in Kukes as saying 3,000 people had crossed the border. ATA said 10,000 refugees had entered on Saturday.

In Tirana, the government set up a committee on Sunday headed by Deputy

Prime Minister Ilir Meta to deal with refugees from Kosovo.

The meeting reiterated an appeal to foreign donors for medicines, food supplies, beds and other goods. Some 100 buses will leave Tirana for Kukes during the day to help distribute the refugees in northern Albania.

A leading ethnic Albanian guerrilla on Saturday urged terrified civilians not to abandon Kosovo despite the brutal onslaught by Serbian security forces.

"Albanian people, do not fall prey to panic. Do not abandon your century-old homes. We have no other homeland," Hashim Thaci said in an address on Albanian television.

Thaci led the ethnic Albanian delegation which signed the peace accord for Kosovo in Paris on March 18.

"While moving or withdrawing, go to the territories under the control of the Kosovo Liberation Army," Thaci told the refugees.

The Albanian government said thousands of other ethnic Albanians in Kosovo had been forced to leave their homes and were waiting in the mountains for the chance to cross the border and seek safety in Albania.

Serbs, even Milosevic foes, bitter over NATO raids

BELGRADE (R) — After four days of NATO air raids on Yugoslavia and no end in sight, even President Slobodan Milosevic's detractors are turning against the West, fearing the bombardments will do little but kill innocents.

Bitterness spread through the two million population of the capital Belgrade on Sunday as increasing numbers filled fetid bomb shelters after NATO warned it would escalate attacks in the face of Milosevic's obduracy.

Bombings of factories on Belgrade's outskirts, which caused leaks of noxious gas on Friday night, and the onset of daytime air raids have magnified fears that innocent civilians, not just military targets, will suffer.

Thousands of people of all ages streamed to an impromptu rock concert in Belgrade's central Republic Square staged to protest at the bombings.

The concert, dubbed "songs keep us alive and united", began while an air raid warning was still in effect and continued after the all-clear. Some spectators and band members wore target-practice symbols across their chests.

Concert goers said the atmosphere at the concert resembled anti-government street protests of the winter of 1996-7.

"This is a time when the people are feeling what their govern-

ment is feeling," said a middle-aged Belgrade woman with liberal, pro-Western views at odds with Milosevic's leftist authoritarian government.

"These sorts of bombings never did any good. They never changed (Iraqi President) Saddam Hussein, they never changed (Libyan leader) Muammar Qadhafi.

"I see no essential difference between those bombings and the bombings now. It's very very wrong. We are all very scared," she told Reuters.

Milosevic vowed on Saturday to resist "NATO military despotism" indefinitely, standing fast in his refusal to grant autonomy to Kosovo's majority Albanians under an international peace plan already signed by them.

Crowds at the rock concert waved Yugoslav and Greek flags — Greece is the only NATO member openly opposing the air strikes — and carried banners making caustic jokes about a downed NATO warplane and U.S. President Bill Clinton.

"An anti-Western mood has definitely set in. NATO's constant claims to be targeting the Serbian military and not civilians has absolutely not won over the hearts and minds of the people," said independent journalist Dejan Anastasijevic.

Clinton and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright have

broadcast messages to the Serb people — hers in Serbian — swearing that the West has nothing against them, only against Yugoslav forces rampaging against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.

"The whole idea (of the bombings) was to protect Kosovo Albanians, but the effect is the opposite," Anastasijevic told Reuters, alluding to reports of Serb paramilitaries running amok in Kosovo since the bombings began.

"The stories about atrocities in Kosovo are being mostly ignored or described as a preparation for a ground offensive by the (ethnic Albanian) Kosovo Liberation Army with NATO serving as its air force."

Politics aside, Belgrade residents said shops remained well supplied with bread and other staples but cigarettes were reported to be scarce and fuel nowhere to be found. Authorities have diverted most fuel to the military.

"There isn't even a black market for petrol or diesel any more," said one professional who must use his car frequently.

Belgrade's streets, much more subdued by day since NATO's attacks started, turn desolate at night when the alliance is believed most likely to swoop. A virtual blackout cloaks the city with all but a few traffic and house lights switched off.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Pope makes Palm Sunday peace appeal for Balkans

VATICAN CITY (AP) — In a Palm Sunday peace appeal, Pope John Paul II urged a return to the negotiating table to resolve the Kosovo conflict. He said he was praying that understanding and brotherhood overcome "the forces of hate" in the Balkans. "The Pope is with those who suffer, and to all he shouts: it is always the hour of peace. It is never too late to meet and negotiate," John Paul said. The Pope spoke at the end of a three-hour mass opening holy week services. He blessed palms and olive branches during the service, moved inside St. Peter's Basilica after torrential rains pounded Rome during the night. Since the NATO air attacks began, the Pope has expressed his disappointment that the peace talks broke down. He said he hoped the olive branches can be "the symbol of that peace for which the peoples of the Balkan region yearn." John Paul said he was praying so that the "prince of peace" inspire "all those who take up arms." Palm Sunday begins a week of solemn ceremonies that culminate on Easter, when faithful recall the resurrection of Jesus Christ. On the Pope's public schedule this week are a holy Thursday service in a Rome basilica and participation in the Good Friday evening procession at the Colosseum. He is to lead a vigil service Saturday night and mass in St. Peter's Square on Easter Sunday.

NATO air strikes split Germans on cold war lines

BONN (R) — NATO air strikes on Yugoslavia have raised a cold war ghost in Germany, with public opinion split along the pre-1990 east-west divide. Opinion polls showed on Sunday. While a clear majority supports Germany's first offensive military action since World War II, support is concentrated in the western part of the country and backing is weak in the formerly communist east. A poll for the focus news weekly found that 56 per cent of people supported Germany's involvement in the NATO air strikes, with 36 per cent against. Eight per cent gave no opinion out of a sample of 1,000 people, the survey by the Polls group found. In western Germany there was 60 per cent support, but in the east just 39 per cent back the air raids. A second poll found 69 per cent support for the air strikes in western Germany, with just 30 per cent against. In the east, support was 41 per cent with 58 per cent against, the poll, also of 1,000 people, by the Ennvid research group for Spiegel magazine found. Ennvid gave no national figures. The air strikes have won broad support from Germany's mainstream political parties but have been vehemently opposed by the small Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) — successor to East Germany's communists who were toppled a decade ago. The PDS organised a rally on Saturday in Berlin against the air strikes which drew a crowd of 5,000. Police reported minor scuffles and several arrests of Serb demonstrators.

'Japanese university finds HIV destroying enzyme'

TOKYO (AFP) — A Japanese research group has found an antibody enzyme which deals a fatal blow to the AIDS-related HIV by destroying its protein, a report said Sunday. The discovery, made by the team of biology professor Taizo Uda at Hiroshima Prefectural University, could pave the way for a remedy for the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), the Sankei Shimbun said. Uda's team studied amino acid in the human immunodeficiency virus and succeeded in extracting an antibody enzyme that destroys the protein, the newspaper said. It is highly possible that the AIDS virus becomes inactive after the protein is destroyed, it said. Antibodies are substances present in or produced by the body to fight against diseases. The research is to be unveiled at a Japanese pharmacology meeting starting Monday, the Sankei said.

Bosnia minister dies after car bombing

SARAJEVO (R) — The deputy interior minister of Bosnia's Muslim-Croat Federation died on Sunday almost two weeks after being injured by a car bomb attack, the BH press news agency reported. Jozo Letutar died in a Sarajevo hospital, the agency said, quoting the doctor on duty Zvonimir Vinkic. No official comment was immediately available. Letutar, who was praised by Western diplomats for fighting corruption, was leaving for work when a bomb wrecked his car in downtown Sarajevo on March 16. Bosnian Croat leaders branded the attack an "act of terrorism" but there was no clear indication who was responsible. The incident came at a time when Bosnian Croats were increasingly complaining about their status inside the Muslim-Croat Federation, which together with the Serb Republic makes up post-war Bosnia.

Pilot of downed F-117 Stealth fighter rescued

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The pilot of a U.S. F-117A Stealth fighter that went down over Yugoslavia was rescued and whisked to safety in a bold behind-the-lines mission, the Pentagon said Sunday.

Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon acknowledged the loss of the aircraft — one of the most sophisticated and expensive warplanes in the world — late Saturday, hours after Yugoslav state television began airing images of the burning wreckage of the distinctive delta-winged fighter near Belgrade.

The rescue put a good news ending on an embarrassing loss as the NATO air campaign enters its fifth day.

"The pilot has been rescued and is safe at an allied base. He and the combat rescue team that rescued him are all safe," Bacon said at a late news conference at the Pentagon.

The F-117A Nighthawk fighter, which according to the video on Serbian television had the markings identifying it as home-based in Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico, had been flying missions over Yugoslavia from the Aviano Air Base in Italy, military sources said.

The pilot, who was not identified, returned safely to Aviano, a NATO spokesman said Sunday, adding that he was in "good condition."

According to NATO it was the first loss of an alliance plane since hostilities against Yugoslavia began on Wednesday.

President Bill Clinton said he was "pleased with the news" of the rescue and expressed pride in the multi-service team that carried it off successfully.

From President Clinton on down, U.S. officials have warned that Yugoslavia's air defences pose a serious threat

to U.S. and other allied aircraft flying bombing missions.

But after hundreds of combat missions without a single loss, the radar-evading F-117 was seen as virtually untouchable.

Bacon, who said the fighter went down at 2000 GMT while on a bombing mission, refused to provide details about what may have gone wrong.

"We do not know, for instance, what caused this plane to crash," Bacon said.

He said the Pentagon had been focusing all its efforts on locating and rescuing the pilot, and would now turn its attention to learning what went wrong.

"I'd like to stress both the bravery of the pilot and the heroism of the rescue team. They performed in a way that makes all Americans proud," Bacon said.

Bacon would not say how

the rescue team pulled it off, or even how long it took them to find the downed flier.

"There may well be other times we have to rescue pilots, and the less said about our techniques about rescuing pilots, the better for their safety," he said.

Helicopter-borne search and rescue have been deployed in the region for Operation Allied Force.

Typically, A-10 Thunderbolt attack planes or F-16 Falcons provide air cover for the helicopters, ready to make strafing runs if necessary, air force officials said.

EA-6B Prowler electronic warfare jets and F-16s armed with HARM anti-radar missiles guard stand watch against any surface-to-air missiles.

Bacon brushed off concerns that F-117s loss may give away the secrets of its high tech Stealth technology.

"From the pictures I saw on

television, I'm not sure there's going to be much left. This is highly sophisticated technology and it's not easy to reproduce," he said.

Meanwhile at NATO head-

quarters in Brussels and in Washington officials did their best to dampen speculation that NATO ground troops would have to be deployed to arm twist Milosevic into compliance.

"The president has made it clear we will not introduce ground troops into combat or any hostile environment," said David Leavy, spokesman for the National Security Council (NSC) in Washington.

"We can accomplish our military objective with air power, and that is what we are focused on," he added, stating the government line.

Serb policemen and Yugoslav army personnel look at the markings of the U.S. Stealth bomber F-117 following the crash of the aircraft late Saturday. It is still not clear whether the aircraft was brought down by Serb fire or a technical fault (AFP photo)

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Serb policemen and Yugoslav army personnel look at the markings of the U.S. Stealth bomber F-117 following the crash of the aircraft late Saturday. It is still not clear whether the aircraft was brought down by Serb fire or a technical fault (AFP photo)





French firemen examine burned out vehicles, March 28, which they were forced to abandon in the Mont Blanc tunnel during the height of the fire. Forty people perished in the blaze which spread quickly after a truck caught fire (Reuters photo)

Firemen douse last 'hot spot' after Mont Blanc tunnel tragedy

CHAMONIX, France (AFP) — Firefighters on Sunday managed to douse the last "hot spot" in the Mont Blanc tunnel, five days after a catastrophic fire killed 40 people.

The death toll may rise, authorities cautioned as a special police team arrived to help identify those who died in the raging inferno.

"It is not impossible that more victims will be located under the debris of part of the tunnel roof, an area which we have not yet been able to check," said Commander Philippe Gauthier of the Haute-Savoie fire and rescue services.

Firefighters extinguished the blaze Friday, 52 hours after it broke out on a Belgian truck crossing the 11.5 kilometre tunnel that links France and Italy.

In all, 27 people were rescued by emergency services — 10 on the Italian side and 17 on the French side — after police reacted within "five minutes" of the fire starting.

Officials said Sunday that the last lingering hot spot several hundred

metres long had been cooled to around 30 degrees Celsius and that powerful spotlights were being installed to enable investigators to examine the scene.

The temperature inside the tunnel reached 1,300 degrees Celsius at its hottest.

"Almost all that was left of the trucks was their axles, the asphalt is gone, melted, and the road is nothing but ashes and pieces of the roof which came off in whole slabs," a fire team commander said Saturday.

Forensic experts were struggling Sunday to identify victims who were burned beyond recognition. So far only five bodies had been positively identified. Bonneville prosecutor Bruno Charve said.

"It is very hard work. I've never seen anything like it," a gendarme said.

Motorists in at least 34 vehicles — 23 of them trucks — were incinerated when the fire turned the tunnel into a smoke-filled hell, officials said.

Seven Indian policemen injured defusing bomb in Hindu holy city

AYODHYA, India (AFP) — Seven Indian policemen were injured, two seriously, on Sunday while trying to defuse a powerful time bomb in this Hindu holy city, officials said.

The bomb, weighing eight kilograms, went off at a police station soon after it was recovered from a crowded railway station in Ayodhya, a police spokesman said.

Two members of the bomb disposal squad were in critical condition and rushed to Lucknow, capital of Uttar Pradesh state, while five others were treated in a hospital here for pellet injuries.

The bomb had been set to explode at 7:30 a.m. (0200 GMT), coinciding with the arrival time of

two express trains at the railway station in the town, about 700 kilometres from New Delhi.

The railway station is located barely half-a-kilometre from the site of a 16th-century mosque which was razed by thousands of Hindu fanatics in December 1992, sparking bloody Hindu-Muslim violence in India that left some 2,000 people dead.

The police said the bomb was hidden in a cloth bag and concealed under a bench at the railway station.

A vendor who became suspicious of the bag alerted the police.

Police spokesman K.B. Mishra said the bomb was taken to a police station.

"As the policemen were

defusing it, the bomb exploded," he said.

The police said "some terrorist group" may have been behind the attempted bombing.

The authorities immediately sounded a high-security alert in Uttar Pradesh state, which is governed by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian national party, BJP).

The prime minister is now visiting the state capital Lucknow.

The incident occurred a day after Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Kalyan Singh, a Hindu nationalist, announced in Ayodhya a \$5 million scheme to develop the city into a tourist centre.

Hundreds of thousands of Hindus have been camping at Ayodhya during the past week to observe a religious festival to mark the birth of Hindu warrior god Rama.

"It is an attempt to destabilise Ayodhya," charged Vinay Katiyar, a former parliament member and a leader of the BJP.

"We are lucky the bomb was detected," said Nirmal Katri, an opposition leader.

"It is frightening to visualise what would have happened otherwise."

Hindu fundamentalists allied to India's ruling coalition are determined to build a temple at the site of the razed mosque, claiming it to be the birthsite of Rama.

Jiang again dogged by human rights in Austria

VIENNA (AFP) — Chinese President Jiang Zemin reiterated Sunday his defence of Beijing's human rights record, an issue which continued to dog him on the final leg of a three-nation European tour.

A small group of demonstrators chanted "Free Tibet" as the 72-year-old leader arrived for talks at the Hofburg former imperial palace in Vienna, where Jiang met Austrian President Thomas Klestil.

Jiang, who has already travelled to Italy and Switzerland, said rights were linked to economic development among other factors, adding that Western Europeans did not know enough about China's situation to fully understand it.

The main aim of Jiang's visit, on which he is accompanied by an 80-strong delegation, is to boost economic and political ties. But the rights issue has followed him wherever he goes.

Klestil also broached the issue in the two men's talks Sunday morning, saying later he had raised the subjects of

rights, religious freedom and Tibet.

Jiang said afterwards: "On the question of human rights, there is much common ground between China and Western countries, but at the same time there are many differences of opinion."

"This is due to different historical and cultural background. It is also due to the different level of economic development and many other factors," he added at a joint press conference.

Jiang said many people in Europe did not know the reality of China's human rights policies. "We live in a multi-faceted and colourful world, so we shouldn't demand the same from all countries," he said.

"We welcome the fact that people from all levels increasingly come to China to see the situation with their own eyes," he said.

Jiang has been seeking to boost cooperation between Beijing and Europe in what diplomats see as a bid to warm ties at a time when relations

with the U.S. are strained.

His trip has also been clouded by the Kosovo crisis, which has erupted into air strikes while he has been in Europe. Beijing is firmly opposed to NATO's use of force over the troubled Serbian province.

Kosovo was not mentioned during the joint press conference, at which only Austrian and Chinese journalists were allowed to ask questions.

The rights protesters outside the Hofburg Sunday were kept at a safe distance as Jiang arrived, but shouted their slogans through megaphones, while their brightly coloured banners attracted the attention of tourists.

"Taiwan is not a part of China," read one banner held aloft by the protesters on the Heldenplatz (Heroes' Square) in front of the Hofburg palace.

Jiang, who arrived Saturday from Switzerland, also had scheduled meetings with Chancellor Viktor Klima and other officials, as he prepares to end his European trip on Tuesday.

Underlining the trip's economic focus, Chinese Foreign Trade Minister Shi Guangsheng — part of the 80-strong delegation accompanying Jiang — was due to meet his Austrian counterpart Johann Farnleitner Sunday.

It is the first trip by a Chinese head of state to Austria, a country on the eastern edge of the European Union which has strong economic links with the ex-communist states of central Europe.

Above all Jiang wants to downplay the human rights issue which clouded his trips to both Italy and Switzerland.

In Rome Jiang was heckled by a number of small but vocal rights protesters, while both Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro and premier Massimo d'Alema raised the rights issue.

Then in Switzerland Jiang reportedly lashed out at local officials for allowing protests outside the federal palace building where he was supposed to be received with full military honours ceremony.

Huge rally against Taiwan N-power plant project

TAIPEI (AFP) — Some 2,000 slogan-shouting protesters took to the streets here Sunday after the government approved plans for a controversial nuclear power plant in northern Taiwan.

Some angry protesters with yellow headbands reading "Opposing nuclear power to save Taiwan" pelted eggs and water-filled balloons at the Atomic Energy Council offices. No clashes were reported.

Riot police had cordoned off the council building and erected barbed wire fences before the protesters arrived.

The cabinet-level council issued a licence for the 170 billion Taiwan dollar (\$5.3 billion) power plant project on March 17, sparking a new wave of objections to the project.

Demonstrators demanded that Hu Chin-Piao, head of the council, step down.

Kao Cheng-Yen, leader of the conservationist campaign, insisted "money must not be spent on the risky project" and vowed to "have the fourth nuclear power plant project be killed forever."

The march commemorated the Three Mile Island incident in the United States 20 years ago to highlight the potential risk of the project.

The state-run Taiwan Power Co. (Taipower), the island's sole power supplier, has three nuclear power plants in operation.

The island's fourth plant is to be located in the coastal town of Kungliao, Taipei county. Its reactors are scheduled to come on line in 2004 and 2005 respectively with a total capacity of 2.7 million kilowatts.

The demonstrators also marched to Taipower and the economic ministry before arriving at the presidential square,

where an "action drama" designed to mimic what they said was a holocaust arising from a nuclear incident was played.

They alleged the licence was illegal as Taipower had not conducted an environmental impact report despite altering the design of the two reactors.

Lin Yi-Hsiung, chairman of the opposition Democratic Progressive Party, blasted the council's approval, describing the step as "illegal".

Defending the project, Taipower official Hsu Ku said Taiwan has to continue with the project if it wants to diversify its energy sources.

"In a country like Taiwan, eggs must not be put in just one basket," he added.

Thermal power makes up 71.9 per cent of the electricity Taipower generates, with hydro-

electric power accounting for 10.4 per cent and nuclear power 17.7 per cent.

Hsu said Taipower's power reserve ratio now standing at 9.3 per cent would slip by four per cent without the new nuclear power plant. The ratio of peak-load consumption against power supplier's capacity stands at around 20 per cent in industrialised countries, he said.

The fourth nuclear power plant project was first unveiled 19 years ago but shelved following objections from conservation groups and residents.

In Taiwan's first referendum in May 1994, as many as 96 per cent of Kungliao residents objected to the plant.

Hitachi and Toshiba of Japan and General Electric of the United States won a \$1.6 billion contract in 1997 to build the two reactors.

'Virus outbreak under control'

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi appealed for calm Sunday amid an encephalitis outbreak that has killed 63 people, saying the situation was under control.

"We view the situation as serious but it is under control. We need not panic. All measures including by local and foreign experts are being taken to contain the outbreak," he was reported as saying by the official Bernama news agency.

Abdullah was appointed Wednesday to replace Health Minister Chua Jui Meng to head a revamped cabinet task-force, charged with curbing the epidemic which has triggered a health scare.

The deputy premier said local authorities and experts from Australia, Taiwan and the Atlanta-based Centres for Disease Control, had coordinated their efforts to halt the pig-borne viral dis-

ease.

Emergency areas had been identified and the approach — of mass pig slaughter, intensive fogging and vaccination — appeared to be producing results, he said.

The task force, grouping 10 ministries, would discuss the cost of the pig culling and assistance to the victims, at their meeting Tuesday, he added.

The epidemic broke out in pig farms in northern Perak state in October and was reported to have killed 15 people before spreading to southwest Negeri Sembilan two months later, crippling Malaysia's 1.5 billion ringgit (\$395 million) pig-rearing industry.

Soldiers were daily killing thousands of infected pigs in Negeri Sembilan, Perak and central Selangor states. Authorities are considering electrocution to speed up the operation, now done by shooting.

The pig carcasses would be incinerated to prevent an outbreak of

the disease in the future, Bernama cited Transport Minister Ling Liong Sik as saying.

Malaysia, admitting it is facing an emergency, has sought foreign expertise to diagnose a new virus suspected to be responsible for most of the 63 deaths. Only 18 of the deaths were confirmed to be due to the Japanese encephalitis (JE).

Foreign experts said initial tests showed the new virus was a "close relative" but "distinct" from the hendra strain, named after a suburb in Brisbane, Australia, where it affected horses and humans in 1994.

The government would give priority to prevention, control and treatment, Health Minister Chua reportedly said Sunday.

"The main problem to our mind is the hendra-related virus. At the same time, we must not forget the preventive and control measures for JE."

"We do not know much at this moment

about the hendra-related virus. In terms of public health, in terms of preventing people from getting infected, we assume the worst-case scenario."

Workers at pig farms and abattoirs were told to adhere to strict hygiene methods as the new virus can be killed simply by soap and detergent, he added.

Opposition lawmaker Lim Kit Siang called on the government to offer a 200 ringgit (\$53) compensation to farmers for each pig killed.

"The crisis faced by the victims... are too big for the pig farmers or any community to handle and requires full government intervention and rescue," Lim said in a statement.

In an editorial, the New Sunday Times newspaper said the "importance of a positive maintenance culture has been brought poignantly home" by the epidemic and that had modern farms been built, Malaysia would have been spared the crisis.

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Right message at right time

THE EUROPEAN Union's endorsement of the Palestinian people's right to statehood is a positive development that will enable President Yasser Arafat to delay the declaration of a state until after May 4. The Palestinians' right to a state of their own on the land of Palestine is not only a matter of self-determination but also a right recognised by the international community in the 1945 partition plan of historical Palestine.

All international human rights treaties and conventions begin with a provision calling for the total and full respect for the exercise of the right of self-determination by all peoples. The EU may have adopted this position in order to lessen the pressures on Arafat, and to give him assurances that when the time comes the EU members will recognise the Palestinian state. During his recent visit to Washington for talks with President Bill Clinton, Arafat asked for a clear-cut U.S. commitment in favour of the Palestinians' right to exercise the right of self-determination. It seems that Washington was hesitant to go that far in public lest it offends Israel.

With Europe's commitment to the principle of creating an independent Palestinian state on Palestinian soil, what remains to be settled is the timing of the birth of such a state. As Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien had said during Arafat's visit to Ottawa last week, the Palestinian people cannot wait indefinitely for Israeli cooperation to attain this inevitable objective. Likewise the EU has expressed the same sense of exacerbation with Israel when it called for a speedy negotiating process that will lead to the birth of a free and sovereign Palestine. Even the majority of Israelis have reconciled themselves to this inescapable conclusion. Only Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his hard-line supporters stand in the way. We trust that this sole obstacle would be removed when Israeli voters cast their votes in the upcoming May election.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RATS Mahmoud Rimawi said the European Union's support for the establishment of a Palestinian state in principle and of negotiations for that purpose is not something new. The union's 15 members have always been favoured the right to self-determination in line with the Western civilisation's principles. The declaration carries "symbolic" compensation to the Palestinians who have suffered since the Jewish state's establishment, in which Europe participated, added Rimawi. The declaration also carried a clear message to the U.S. administration, which is unable to take a balanced stand regarding the crisis, thanks to the "tight" internal political and elections considerations, according to the writer. Rimawi added the Israeli protest against the declaration reveals the great confusion inside Tel Aviv's rightist groups, which consider the monopolisation of people's rights as a sustainable philosophy. Lack of "ethics" and insistence on misusing the fruits of peace are controlling the Israeli government, a so-called peace partner, which is in fact one of the peace's first enemies.

AL DUSTOUR'S editorial said the recent European Union (EU) decision to support the Palestinian's right to self-determination, including the right to establish an independent state, is a positive and important development to achieve this legitimacy. There is no doubt that the decision is expected to positively effect the Middle East peace process, especially that it comes within the framework of international diplomatic efforts to discuss the declaration of an independent state ahead of the Israeli elections, added the editorial. The Palestinians welcomed the EU's declaration, while Israel rejected it. However, the newspaper said, the world is waiting for the U.S. to announce its stand, which has always been in support of Israel and contrary to that of the international community, according to the editorial. The paper welcomed the EU's stand and hoped that the move will encourage the U.S. government to "unchain" itself from political commitments to Israel and respond to international justice.

Exploiting our options before TRIPS becomes reality

ON NOVEMBER 24, 1997, the Jordan-EU Association Agreement was signed, with Jordan committing to apply the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (better known as TRIPS) agreement to the pharmaceutical and chemical industries within three years from the date of entry into force of the agreement or from the accession date to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), whichever happens earlier.

The local pharmaceutical industry, which is not presently compliant with TRIPS, is not a producer of patents. Accordingly, a new competitive strategy is needed at once. The industry is considered Jordan's third most important industry (after tourism and mining, respectively) in terms of size. It employs 5,000 workers with an annual product of U.S.\$180 million, of which 70 per cent is exported. Furthermore, almost 40 per cent of all drugs produced by the industry are likely to be affected because TRIPS

protects both the process by which a drug is created and the final product (current Jordanian intellectual property legislation protect only the final product, not the process). The remaining 60 per cent are either drugs whose patents have expired or are generic.

Also, the sector's expenditures on research and development, although among the highest in the nation, do not exceed two to three per cent of sales, with the majority of the funds allocated to ensuring the stability of the drug compound rather than on inventing new drugs.

Hence, it is extremely doubtful that Jordanian drug manufacturers will become successful inventors in three years.

The good news, as far as the pharmaceutical industry is concerned, is that the agreement has not yet entered into force because neither the Jordanian Parliament nor any of the member states have ratified it.

Hence, the time limit given to the pharmaceutical industry will probably expand to the year 2003, particularly since accession to the WTO is most likely to occur by the end of 1999. The year 2000 will witness the start of a new international negotiations round, which usually results in greater demands from prospective entrants. The bad news, also as far as the industry is concerned, is that the 2003 horizon is high.

What strategic options are available to the industry? There are two general competitiveness strategic options: Either become an innovative leader in terms of inventions, creativity and value added, or be the lowest cost producer, the most efficient producer. The former is clearly a long shot because it is almost impossible for the pharmaceutical industry, given the present inadequacies and established habits, to become an innovative world leader in the short run. Furthermore, acquiring the use of patents

Economic Review



Dr. Yusef Mansur

from large companies through licensing agreements may prove futile for many because of the size of the Jordanian market vis-a-vis other regional markets such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the latter option is probably the more feasible competitive strategy because the Jordanian industry can become a low-cost producer by reviewing

the value chain (all the stages of production of the good or service) of its products and focusing on increasing efficiency in any or all the stages of production.

In other words, the present 15 manufacturers must identify their areas of strength in generic and over-the-counter drugs and study all the stages of manufacturing, marketing, sale and distribution to determine their areas of competitive advantage. Since most of the components and the packaging are imported, few would be able to claim that they have a cost advantage in manufacturing. Furthermore, their marketing techniques and efforts, domestically and abroad, are well below state-of-the-art. On the other hand, their areas of strength are in sales and distribution with well established distribution chains in North Africa and Asia. This is where the industry should concentrate its activities building upon existing advantages immediately to become not only a

distributor of its own generic drugs but also an international distributor for the larger companies. Thus, a short run dilemma is resolved and cost leadership is generated.

Moreover, a long-run strategy would be to channel future profits acquired from the sales and distribution activities to the production of Jordanian patents, given that other economic factors are also encouraged and become even more favourable.

In short, there is a significant need for strategic planning by Jordanian industrialists. Globalising entails a change in strategic thinking and picking not only survival strategies, but winning strategies. Competitiveness may even be encouraged by the recognition of TRIPS and other intellectual property legislation. But this is only feasible if the correct strategies are in place. What is needed are well-informed decisions and timely action for the drug companies to choose what not to do.

Pinochet sets the precedent:

No way out for Milosevic when the bombs stop

By Gwynne Dyer

"THE OFFICIAL position of defendants, whether heads of state or officials in government departments, shall not be considered as freeing them from responsibility or mitigating punishment," reads the Charter of the International Military Tribunal that tried the Nazi leaders after the World War II. But Serbian dictator Slobodan Milosevic had no reason to worry about that, because the Nuremberg trials were only for Germans.

Last Wednesday's landmark ruling by Britain's Law Lords that being a former head of state gives former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet no immunity from prosecution for crimes he committed while in power is another matter entirely. It means that Milosevic cannot afford to lose power if he hopes to avoid prison or the gallows. But whether that makes him more or less likely to end the war quickly is another question.

It's true that Milosevic already had to worry about the international tribunal that has been created for Bosnia, the scene of the worst crimes of mass murder committed under his auspices. However, the danger of prosecution was actually pretty limited.

It could be a problem for Milosevic if one of his leading Bosnian Serb henchmen, like Radovan Karadzic, was captured, and spilled the beans to the Hague tribunal about the

orders he received from Belgrade. But it would not be in his own interests to confess, and until NATO lost patience in Kosovo and started bombing on Wednesday, men like Karadzic faced little risk of arrest anyway. NATO troops were leaving them alone to keep Bosnia quiet.

But now Milosevic faces a much higher risk. He could lose power in Belgrade if he allows allied troops into Kosovo to supervise a peace agreement there. He could also fall if he goes on defying NATO, and his own people overthrow him to stop the bombing. Either way he becomes, like Pinochet, an ex-head of state — and probably an exiled one.

That is never an ideal situation, but it has proved both safe and comfortable for other ex-dictators from Haiti's "Baby Doc" Duvalier (now living in France) to Ethiopia's Haile Mariam Mengistu (in Zimbabwe) to Uganda's Idi Amin (in Saudi Arabia). The precedent created by the British ruling makes them all vulnerable to extradition.

Insofar as Pinochet himself goes, the judgement is only a limited triumph for international justice, for the Law Lords ruled that he could not be extradited for any charges that were not criminal offences in Britain at the time.

So since Britain only incorporated the provisions of the International Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading

Treatment or Punishment into its own Criminal Justice Act in 1988, Pinochet can only be extradited to face trial for crimes he committed after that date.

This is good news for Pinochet, since the mass murders and systematic torture of thousands mostly happened in the first years after his coup in 1973. Of the 30 charges Spain originally brought against him, it must agree to try him only for three post-1988 instances of torture and murder before Britain will agree to send him to Madrid for trial. And there are still several further legal hoops to go through in Britain before even that comes to pass.

But the Law Lords did say, quite unequivocally, that being an ex-head of state no longer confers immunity from prosecution for all offences. In Lord Phillips' words: "International law is on the move... There are some categories of crime so grave that they shock the consciousness of mankind and... any individual who commits such a crime offends against international law."

Lord Saville, who characterised Pinochet as "a prime example of an official torturer," said that Pinochet lost his immunity from extradition when Chile, Spain, and Britain all ratified the Torture Convention in 1988.

"If there were states that wished to preserve such immunity (for their heads of state) in the face of the

universal condemnation of official torture, it is perhaps not surprising that they kept quiet about it," he said.

For those younger dictators who were still killing and torturing people after

If Milosevic loses power in the collapse... there are not a lot of places he can go that would shelter him from the demands for extradition that would surely follow him. When you are responsible for killing hundreds of thousands of people, you must expect some resentment

1988, the ruling is a nightmare. After they lose power, they are vulnerable to demands for extradition not just from the country they ruled, but from any other country whose nationals they murdered — demands that could pursue them no matter where they take refuge.

Just as Spain has asked Britain to extradite Pinochet for the murder and torture of Spanish citizens in Chile and elsewhere, so Canada could ask France to extradite Duvalier for the murder or torture of people with dual Haitian-Canadian citizenship — and the fact that he was a head of state when he ordered the crimes no longer gets him off the hook.

Now put yourself in Milosevic's shoes. This fourth Balkan war of the 90s is his last — after Kosovo, "Yugoslavia" (i.e. Serbia) he "has no other non-Serb republics left to drive into revolt — and Milosevic risks losing power in the collapse. If he does, there are not a lot of places he can go that would shelter him from the demands for extradition that would surely follow him. When you are responsible for killing hundreds of thousands of people, you must expect some resentment.

In fact, the only safe haven for Milosevic, if he must leave Belgrade, are Russia or Belarus, where the principle of "Slavic solidarity" blots out all his sins. (Never mind that most of his victims were also Slavs, and that other Slavic countries, from Poland to Ukraine to Bulgaria, can tell the difference between mass murderers and Slavs worthy of support.)

Even Russia and Belarus would not be completely safe havens, for their courts must treat extradi-

tion requests from their major creditors and trading partners seriously. So what goes through Milosevic's mind as he contemplates the end-game that has now begun?

Perhaps not very much, for he just sits in the dark drinking a good deal of the time. His circle of advisers is so narrow that he may not even understand the implications of the Pinochet decision. But if he does, how will it affect his decisions in the next days and weeks?

Not very positively, for he may well conclude that fighting all the way to the last ditch is likelier to keep him out of jail than making a deal that might turn him into an ex-head of state, an exile and a target for extradition. On the other hand, it is clear that NATO is desperate to cut any deal that will save it from having to commit ground troops to drive Serbian forces out of Kosovo. It would be quite willing to leave Milosevic in power in Serbia proper if the Serbs themselves don't throw him out.

So on balance, he is likely to tough it out for a while, and then look for a deal in which NATO itself recognises him as the legitimate ruler of a yet more shrunken "Yugoslavia." You can extradite ex-heads of state, but you can't extradite ruling ones.

McCarthyism revisited — the case of the L.A. Eight

By Michael Shehadeh

WHEN FEDERAL AGENTS, backed by local police, barged into my home and arrested me at gunpoint, I thought they didn't know what they were doing. I presumed they had gotten the wrong address. Today after twelve years of fighting the government attempts to deport me, it is clear to me they knew exactly what they were doing. It was all part of a larger plan.

The government wanted to establish a legal precedent against immigrants whose political views were deemed undesirable. They thought that if they accuse Palestinians, on February 24, the supreme court handed the government what it was seeking. The court has decided to preclude federal courts from jurisdiction over constitutional challenges in a deportation setting. The government can deport immigrants for their political opinions.

'As hard as I try to refer to myself and family as we Americans, the supreme court decision in the back of my mind keeps pushing back you foreigners'

I immigrated to the United States in 1975 to escape persecution. I came to this country to speak and live freely. I made America my home because I wanted to raise a family in a secure and safe environment. We have always been a law-abiding family. However, when I spoke out in favour of Palestinian self-determination and independence I found my home and family threatened and my freedom taken from me. I was deemed dangerous by the government when I advocated an independence day for the Palestinians similar to the fourth of July we Americans celebrate.

As hard as I am trying to refer to myself and family as we Americans, the supreme court decision in the back of my mind keeps pushing back you foreigners. We spend large sums of money on the Middle East. We invest lots of time and energy in that region. We send our daughters and sons there in harms way.

We need to know all the political perspectives pertaining to independently make up our own minds based on a balanced knowledge of the situation, and not only on what the government tells us. How many times has the government lied to the people. Watergate.

Iran/ContraGate, and all the others gates that fill volumes? The government wanted to stifle immigrants from speaking their opinions; the supreme court has given them the means to do so.

My views in support of Palestinian independence, once unpopular, are now mainstream. The PLO, once considered a terrorist organisation, is now a partner of our administration in the pursuit for peace in the Middle East. This is what I've always advocated: why then, does the government want to deport me? After examining 10,000 pages of evidence, the lower courts saw this case for what it is, a blatant

attack on free speech, and ruled against the government. Judge Stephen Wilson of the Los Angeles district court said that this case borders on the outrageous. William Webster, head of the FBI at the time of the arrest, testified before Congress that we had never engaged in any criminal conduct. It is time for the Justice Department to drop this case before it does more damage.

If the injustice of Justice Scalia's opinion is allowed to stand, it will be devastating to our democracy. He wrote: The executive should not have to disclose its real reasons for deeming nationals of a particular country a special threat or indeed for simply wishing to antagonise a particular foreign country by focusing on that country's nationals.

What this in essence means is that the internment of Japanese Americans was lawful for simply wishing to antagonise a foreign country, and

that it could be repeated against the Chinese, Iraqis, Serbians, Libyans, Sudanese and the Palestinians.

It is McCarthyism all over again. Only this time not communists but immigrants are being targeted. The chilling effect of the supreme court's decision would render millions of lawful residents speechless.

As an immigrant I am being stripped of my right to speak freely, as an American I am being stripped of my right to hear other immigrants speak freely. It is a losing proposition for all of us.

— Michael Shehadeh, who lives in Garden Grove, is Western Regional Director of the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. He is one of the so-called "L.A. Eight," who are facing deportation, charged by the INS under terrorism laws for supporting a Palestinian rights organisation.

Feature:
Japan sent
to keep e

If you wa

Blindness is a
times more
to happen to
People in the
South than in the
North, and many
cases are pre-
ventable. Patrick
Lefferty reports
on an ambitious
campaign to wipe
out preventable
blindness by the
Year 2020.

Japan sends robots to keep elderly company

By Kazuhiro Shimamura
Agence France Presse

TOKYO — Japan's Matsushita Electric Industrial Co. Ltd. has developed robotic bears, cats and tigers as pets to comfort the growing number of old people in the country.

With 27 per cent of the population expected to be over 65 by 2025, it expects a growing and increasingly lucrative market for a gadget that can even save its owners' lives.

Weighing just one kilogramme, the furry robot, available in cat, tiger and bear varieties, smiles and delivers verbal greetings when touched, according to Matsushita spokesman Yoshihiro Kitadeya.

A microchip inside the pet stores every interaction with its owner and analyses the log to decide for itself when to wake up and kick off a conversation with a friendly "good morning," Kitadeya said.

"Its eyes are composed of a liquid crystal display panel so the robot can smile at you or act like a living pet by simulating sleepy eyes," said the spokesman.

The robotic pet's information logs can be accessed through telecom-

munication links such as mobile telephones to monitor interactions with owners living without human company.

"Depending on how you programme it, the pet can start conversations when a room is quiet and help monitor the user's health," said the spokesman for Matsushita, maker of brands such as Panasonic, Technics, National and Quasar.

A long period of silence from an owner can trigger the pet to make a mobile telephone call informing caretakers or relatives of a possible problem, he explained.

"In the past, robots like this could only mimic the motions of real animals solely for the purpose of entertainment," said Kitadeya.

Now the questionable fortune of having a robotic pet for company is available at a cost of about 50,000 yen (\$420) each and 500,000 yen with the whole remote-monitoring system.

The pets are scheduled for release in 2001.

Matsushita isn't the only company seeking to prise open the wallets of the elderly.

At least one company

has been featured in the media for offering an ash-storage system for land-short Japan.

Once your relative has passed on, the firm offers to store the ash in a warehouse.

At a special shrine, visiting mourners simply key in their own code and the right ashes are automatically delivered to the spot, ready for prayers to be offered.

On the Internet, home pages are available for relatives to pay virtual visit to ancestors' graves from anywhere in the world.

Matsushita Electric Works Ltd., a leading electric equipment and construction materials maker, already sells products targeted at the older market, from special bathtubs to "friendly" stairways.

It built a high-tech nursing home last year with each of its 80 rooms equipped with monitoring systems and "barrier-free" furniture.

"We expect making products for the elderly to become one of the company's major businesses in the near future," said the company's General Manager of Public Relations, Tomio Kado.

By Pelin Turgut
Reuters

ISTANBUL — The crowd chanted God's blessings, the steel gates of the Pinarhisar prison opened and the popular Islamist former mayor of Istanbul vanished into what many secularist Turks hope will be eternal political oblivion.

But when Recep Tayyip Erdogan began a 10-month sentence for sedition this weekend, the Islamist Virtue Party bade farewell to a man clearly unbowed in his ambition to lead.

At the mosque where he said final prayers, the faithful cried "God is greatest" and brandished photographs of his youthful moustachioed face.

Women wearing Islamic-style head scarves and head-to-toe black chadors flanked a crowd of men prostrate in prayer.

"This song cannot end here," he said in an interview before his imprisonment. "Politics is not just about holding a seat, it is about the place you have in people's hearts."

Marathon-runner Erdogan, 44, is widely seen as one of a new generation of more moderate Islamists.

Gone are heavy beards,

calls for an Islamic economic order, the liberation of Jerusalem, the declarations of kinship with Libya and other staples of fire-brand Islamist rhetoric that led to the banning of Virtue's predecessor, Welfare.

As mayor of Turkey's biggest city, his popularity went beyond Virtue supporters — and therein lay the danger of the man.

Critics see him and his like as wolves in sheep's clothing.

Their style may be different, the smile easier, but they share in the same conspiracy to create an Islamic regime.

Erdogan is accused of showing bias in awarding contracts to Islamist firms and donating student scholarships to supporters.

In his youth, Erdogan abandoned ambitions in professional soccer after being hand-picked for oratory skills by Necmettin Erbakan, the conservative architect of Turkey's Islamists.

Downfall the same poetic skills that marked him out in youth as a future leader would bring about his downfall some 20 years later.

"The mosques are our barracks, the domes our

helmets, the minarets our bayonets and the faithful our soldiers," he said in a fiery address to supporters in south east Turkey.

The subsequent court verdict was a bitter pill to swallow.

Erdogan faces a lifelong political ban, one of the most prominent victims of a secularist clamp down on political Islam.

Only days ago Virtue pressed in a stormy parliament to repeal the law used to jail him. But the bid failed, resisted by secularist parties and, behind them, the army.

Bans in Turkey come and go, however. President Suleyman Demirel and Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit are among dozens of leading politicians excluded for years from politics.

Erdogan built a reputation as a pragmatic administrator who helped make Istanbul, chaotic home to 10 million, slightly more habitable. He would have been a key asset at April's elections, where Virtue hope to improve on the 20 per cent vote that made the Islamists the biggest party in the outgoing parliament.

"He's a hard-working, honest man. Of course there was still corruption, but much less in this per-

od," documentary-maker Hikmet Yenigun who works with Erdogan's office, told Reuters.

The son of migrants from the Black Sea region, Erdogan claims kinship with millions of second-generation migrants from rural Anatolia to Istanbul who feel abandoned by the elite.

"I sold water, simit [sesame bread rings], postcards. And that is how I paid my school fees and bought my first [Koran] book," he said in a book interview.

He took charge of overpopulated Istanbul in 1994 with a 25 per cent vote in mayoral polls that brought dozens of Islamists to power for the first time in Turkey's 75-year secular history.

Demirel spoke scathingly of a "dictatorship of the 25 per cent." The army, which sees itself as custodian of a Western-style democracy and has carried out three coups in defence of it, was also unnerved.

An Islamist-led national government was forced from power under military pressure in 1997 after a year in office. Welfare and its leader Erbakan were banned. Erdogan was seen as a favourite to lead the successor party, Virtue, but

hard liners prevailed with support behind the scenes from Erbakan.

"Erdogan represents a different approach, this creates tension within the party," columnist Ali Bayramoglu said.

Some have predicted a split in Virtue, now itself threatened by a ban, into a "reformist" party under a man such as Erdogan and a more conservative grouping influenced by Erbakan.

Virtue was conspicuously silent on the loss of Erdogan. Few Virtue flags were seen in the crowd accompanying him to jail.

Commentators say jealousy among the party's old guard, as well as his own desire to maintain a low profile were at play.

But both generations have in common their desire to keep the party a men-only club. Women are relegated to special ladies commissions, although popular pressure has led to female candidates being posted for the first time in April polls.

Erdogan seems phlegmatic about his future life behind bars.

"I'll learn English," he said. "It's something I've always lacked." Then, of course, there is the poetry book.

If you want to get fit, get fidgeting

By Roger Dobson

FORGET DIETING, weight-lifting and all those work-outs — try fidgeting instead. Because, according to new research from the U.S. Mayo Clinic, tiny exercise performed often enough can have as big an effect as rigorous exercise done less frequently.

Life's fidgets, those compulsive foot-tappers, head-noddors, side-slappers and finger-drummers, have been found to be natural-born weight losers. They may irritate colleagues with their antics and annoy loved ones, but researchers have discovered that serial fidgets can burn up 10 times as many calories a day as those who don't suffer from involuntary movements. What's more, a fidget who is always on the move can burn up as many calories as would be lost in jogging or swimming sessions two or three times a week.

Because different personality types are prone to fidget, the new research may help explain why, for example, neurotics are more likely to be thin than over-weight, and why the laid-back are more inclined to put on the pounds.

The Mayo Clinic scientists examined what they call non-exercise activity thermogenesis, or NEAT, where we burn up energy without consciously doing exercise. Volunteers were given an extra 1,000 calories of

food a day for eight weeks. All put on weight, but some put on 10 times as much as others. The researchers suggest that this difference can be explained by NEAT.

Many seemingly minor physical activities could be covered by NEAT, including the physical effort in maintaining posture when sitting, the energy expended in standing up, or in foot-tapping — as well as general fidgeting, pacing, excessive movements of the head, and phantom piano-playing. Some involuntary hand and leg movements are also categorised as NEAT activities.

The theory behind NEAT is that although health advice has centred on planned physical activities, these are not the only ways the body can burn calories. Every time the body moves, it needs fuel — and the greater the exercise, the greater the number of calories burned off and not converted into fat. But what the fidget research suggests for the first time is that a tiny exercise done often enough can have as big an effect as rigorous exercise done less frequently.

Eight hours of vigorous foot-tapping in the office, for instance, may equal one workout session in the gym, or 30 minutes of squash.

And involuntary foot-tappers have been known to keep going for such long periods without even being aware of what they

are doing.

Professor Greg McLatchie, a surgeon and sporting injury specialist at Sunderland University, welcomes the findings: "Foot-tappers use the big muscle of the calf to get the foot to tap. The muscle has a metabolic rate and will burn energy during that activity."

It has to be supplied with carbohydrate energy, so in effect people who tap their foot for hours at a time are burning off calories. On top of that, he says, foot-tapping is also good for the circulation: "Some people can fidget for up to 10 hours a day. They may change their seat position constantly, or shuffle their feet, or correct their posture and so on, while they are watching TV, working at a computer or eating. We may not usually view these things as physical activities, but they are — and as a consequence they do help to keep weight down."

"I knew a surgeon in Glasgow who walked up and then down a flight of stairs between every operation he carried out," says McLatchie. "He was obsessive about it and would do it maybe 12 times a day. Even when he was sitting down talking over coffee, his foot would be tapping and his fingers playing a piano that wasn't there. He was, by the way, also very thin. Just why some people fidget and others don't remains unclear."

Some psychologists believe fidgeting is only found in particular personality groups. People who are neurotic, anxious, or under stress are among those thought to be prone to involuntary movements like foot-tapping and fidgeting, which are known to work as a comforter. It also appears to occur at equal rates among men and women, but is more common among children.

One new theory here is that children may fidget, not because they are bored, but because they need to exercise their body. "It's entirely possible that certain personality types are more likely to fidget," says McLatchie. "People who are relaxed and laid-back may be more inclined to put on weight than those who are slightly uptight or tense or worried."

More research is now likely to take place, aimed at finding out which personality traits show a tendency to fidget. The findings from that work may well give a better understanding of why some types shed weight more readily than others.

But there is a downside for those who may now see foot-tapping as a soft option. "No one can ignore 16,000 new infections a day of a virus that has essentially 100 per cent mortality, and the only way it's going to be stopped is a vaccine. Everyone in the world should be rooting not just

for us but for the whole process of vaccine development," Francis said in a telephone interview.

U.S. firm starts testing AIDS vaccine in Thailand

By Maggie Fox
Reuters

WASHINGTON — Hard on the heels of the first AIDS vaccine trial in Africa, U.S. researchers said they had permission to start an advanced trial of an HIV vaccine in Thailand.

VaxGen Inc., a California-based company spun off from the biotechnology firm Genentech, said 2,500 Thais at high risk for the disease would be recruited for the trial of the AIDS vaccine, which has been tailored to work against the strain of HIV seen most commonly in Asia.

"This is the next step around the world," said Dr. Donald Francis, co-founder of VaxGen and former director of the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) AIDS efforts.

"No one can ignore 16,000 new infections a day of a virus that has essentially 100 per cent mortality, and the only way it's going to be stopped is a vaccine. Everyone in the world should be rooting not just

for us but for the whole process of vaccine development," Francis said in a telephone interview.

'No one can ignore 16,000 new infections a day of a virus that has essentially 100 per cent mortality, and the only way it's going to be stopped is a vaccine. Everyone in the world should be rooting not just for us but for ... vaccine development'

— Francis

Experts agree that, long-term, a vaccine is the only answer to HIV. Cocktails of strong drugs can keep the virus at bay,

but they are very expensive, have severe side-effects and are hard to take.

The AIDS vaccine trials will be done in methadone centres in Bangkok that are frequented by intravenous drug users who are at high risk of HIV infection. The CDC estimates that 800,000 of Thailand's 60 million people are infected with the virus that causes AIDS.

VaxGen has already begun testing the vaccine — in Phase I and II safety trials — on up to 90 Thai drug users. In this third leg of trials, the volunteers, who are currently not infected, will be followed for three years to see how many do become infected.

AIDS vaccine uses GP120, one of the surface proteins on the coat of the HIV virus. The idea is that using one of the unique proteins would be enough to stimulate the body's immune system to recognise and attack the viral invaders.

Earlier efforts using GP-120, or the other surface protein GP-41, have

not worked very well. But VaxGen has combined GP-120 from two different strains of the virus and thinks this one might work better.

AIDS vaccine has been in Phase III clinical trials in the United States since last summer. It is the first of more than 45 AIDS vaccines in trials to make it to the last stage of testing before U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval.

But efforts to develop a vaccine based on a live but crippled virus have been hindered by news that the live vaccine can eventually cause HIV infection in monkeys.

Tests show so far that AIDS vaccine stimulates the immune system. Whether this translates into protecting against HIV remains to be shown.

On Monday, the National Institute for Allergies and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) said it had started a Phase I safety trial of another vaccine, made by Rhone-Poulenc subsidiary Pasteur Merieux Connaught, in Uganda.

Campaign eyes end to preventable blindness

Blindness is 10 times more likely to happen to people in the South than in the North, and many cases are preventable. Patrick Lejtenyi reports on an ambitious campaign to wipe out preventable blindness by the year 2020.

THE NUMBER of blind people around the world stands at 45 million and is projected to double in 20 years. Most of the victims will be in the developing world.

"People are 10 times more likely to go blind in the developing world than

people in the developed world, and 80 per cent of these cases are preventable," says Vindy Baines, communications officer for Sight Savers International.

Simple operations, medicine and education would drastically reduce the incidence of blindness, which is costing \$25 billion a year in lost productivity worldwide.

In response, a new campaign is aiming to eradicate preventable global blindness within the next 20 years.

The campaign and the umbrella organisation coordinating it are called Vision 2020: The Right to Sight. It's a joint initiative of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and 19 international eye-care charities.

"Vision 2020 is pulling together all our efforts a little bit tighter," said Bill McAllister, the British director for the Christian

Blind Mission (CBM). "We hope to raise the issue higher up on the national agenda and work even more closely together towards a common goal."

Vision 2020 will tackle four types of preventable blindness: Cataracts, river blindness, trachoma and child blindness.

According to Britain's Department for International Development (DFID), nearly half of all blindness cases are due to cataracts. Affecting over 20 million people, cataracts are a clouding of the eye's lens, which prevents light from entering the eye. No one is sure what causes it, but it is believed to be related to exposure to ultra-violet rays. That would put people living in sunnier southern countries more at risk than those in the north.

A 20-minute operation, costing only £15, can remove cataracts and restore sight entirely. The challenge lies in getting the

treatment to those who need it. "Many sufferers are too poor, too far away from medical centres or don't know that treatment exists," says Baines.

Another leading cause of blindness is river blindness (onchocerciasis), a chronic and contagious disease caused by a parasitic worm spread by the black simuliid fly.

"It is such a dreadful disease because it affects entire villages," says Baines. "In some villages in Central and Western Africa 50 per cent of the adults are affected. It is the children who suffer most because they have to work or act as guides for their (blind) parents or grandparents."

Many villages in afflicted areas have been abandoned altogether, as terrified people move away from the most fertile lands along fast-moving rivers to more arid areas inland. The economic burden this repre-

sents to entire communities, even to entire countries, is vast.

Sight Savers hopes that distribution of the drug Mectizan will eliminate river blindness by 2007.

Trachoma is one of the oldest known infectious diseases and is responsible for 15 per cent of the world's blindness. It is a disfiguring disease that, if left untreated, can permanently and irreversibly damage the eye.

It thrives in areas with poor sanitation and water. It is spread through infected eye discharge and can strike entire families.

"When a mother wipes a child's eyes with the same cloth she wiped an infected child's eyes, the virus is spread," says Baines. It is hoped that trachoma will be eliminated by 2020 through surgery, antibiotics, education, improved hygiene and access to clean water.

According to the DFID,

there are 1.5 million blind children in the world, mainly in Africa and Asia. A campaign to distribute vitamin A tablets and treatment programmes is under way to prevent further cases of childhood blindness.

The WHO is coordinating the Vision 2020 programme but not funding it. That will remain the responsibility of the charities. The most effective way to do that, says one eye-care charity executive, is to lobby governments.

"We've handed a declaration on behalf of Vision 2020 to Clare Short, (Britain's Secretary of State for International Development), and hopefully the Labour government will match it with more funding," says David Coe, European executive director of Orbis.

"We hope to put blindness on the political map and raise public awareness."

Despite the lack of funding from the WHO, the agencies say its endorsement gives Vision 2020 valuable political credibility, especially in the developing world. Working within the WHO will bring, some hope, an unprecedented degree of cooperation among the various charities.

"It's a good-natured fit," says Coe. "We are all committed to working under the WHO banner and are all collaborating at an incredibly high and successful level." Each charity has its own specialisation: Orbis, for example, teaches and trains eye doctors in various countries. Sight Savers International and the CBM perform cataract operations. The CBM is hoping to perform 400,000 cataract operations annually in the developing world. Others in the coalition set up and run clinics and distribute vitamins and tablets.

The charities will also

geographically separate their work to reduce overlap.

The programme is ambitious, but those involved do not think it is beyond reach. McAllister believes talking simple economics will make governments sit up and listen. "When you tell the Indian government their blindness problem is costing them \$4 billion a year, they'll listen. Ask them if they'd like an extra \$4 billion, see what they'll say."

Caring for eyes is one of the easiest, cheapest and most efficient types of health care. Orbis estimates it needs \$180 million to reach its targets. Considering the potential return, it could prove a worthwhile investment

— Patrick Lejtenyi is a Canadian journalist working on an internship at Gemini News Service.

Israel public sector strike escalates

TEL AVIV (R)— Some 400,000 Israeli public sector workers stayed home for a third day on Sunday after Israel's main trade union and the finance ministry failed to strike a wage deal.

"The strike was renewed at 6 a.m. (0400 GMT)," said Histadrut labour federation spokesman Levi Morav.

The open-ended strike, which Histadrut officials said would intensify this week, was launched last Wednesday but was suspended during the Friday-Saturday Israeli weekend.

The Tel Aviv Stock Exchange and banks partially joined the strike by deciding to open late at 10 a.m.

The sanctions, called by Histadrut, have already hit government offices, hospitals, ports and local authorities.

Routing rubbish piled higher on the streets over the weekend.

Officials at Ben Gurion International Airport warned of flight disruptions throughout the day and said take-offs would be halted for three hours in the morning.

The week before the Jewish Passover holiday, which starts Wednesday night, is one of the peak

travel seasons for Israelis.

Finance Minister Meir Sheerit refused to meet Histadrut chief Amir Peretz early on Sunday as planned, saying there was no reason to meet when the gaps between the sides were so wide.

"There is no chance that we will answer their demands. There is no money to pay and we will not pay. We will not pay more than we can," Sheerit told Israel's Army Radio.

The Histadrut demands a 14 per cent wage increase to compensate for 1998 and 1999 inflation. Inflation was 3.6 per

cent in 1998. The treasury has offered a 3.85 per cent wage increase for those years.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has called the strike a political ploy to blackmail the government in the run-up to a general election on May 17.

Netanyahu has accused Peretz, running for parliament at the head of a new Workers' Party in the general election, of launching the strike for political gain.

Peretz has rejected the charge.

Customs Department stirs confusion by asking for detailed information

By Saad G. Hattar

AMMAN — Jordanian entrepreneurs have questioned the legality and viability of controversial customs directives which demand the declaration of what they term as unnecessary data pertaining to imported goods.

This wide-scale protest came in response to a move by the Customs Department, which demanded that all importers should detail further information about the source/sources of their imported goods on a separate sheet of paper, as of April 1.

Those regulations are enforced by WTO members, and Jordan could be preparing the ground for early membership in this organisation.

But businessmen here are wary of a possible backlash.

"The regulations are still new, and we don't know whether they would entail extra duty tariffs or taxes," said a Jordanian importer.

"We already pay 127

believe that they fall in line with Jordanian efforts to join the World Trade Organisation.

Jordan is engaged in grueling talks with the WTO in bid to join this international body by the turn of the century.

Customs reductions, protection of intellectual property rights and higher standard of produce are part of WTO pre-requisites for membership.

kind of taxes and, hence, we are overburdened with extra expenses," he noted.

Importers, however, are yet to detect possible financial repercussions of the new regulations and whether they entail extra expenses.

In this event, they will have to resort to legal action to settle their differences with the Customs Department.

Cautious Qatar adopts austerity budget

DOHA (AFP) — Qatar adopted an austerity budget for the coming fiscal year in case the price of oil, a main force in the emirate's economy, does not rise rapidly, the official QNA news agency has said.

Finance Minister Yussef Hussein Kamal said the budget, which runs from April through March, set aside 9.7 per cent less for spending than the previous budget, QNA reported.

Even so the new budget

forecasts a \$988 million deficit, seven per cent greater than the previous year's deficit of \$920 million.

The new budget is based on an anticipated oil price of \$10 a barrel, \$2 less per barrel than the price on which the previous year's budget was calculated.

The austerity budget comes despite an agreement by Qatar and other oil exporting countries to cut production in order to boost slumping crude

prices.

Under Tuesday's accord, Qatar, the smallest exporter in the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, will trim production by 47,000 barrels a day as of April 1.

The new budget forecasts receipts of \$2.89 billion, a 15 per cent drop over 1998-1999, and expenditures of \$3.88 billion, a 9.7 per cent cut.

Essential civilian services such as health, education and housing were spared any cuts, Kamal

said.

Oil accounts for 30 per cent of Qatar's gross domestic product and 65-70 per cent of the government's revenues, according to Moody's financial evaluators.

The country has been industrialising since 1994 and has the world's third largest reserves of natural gas after Russia and Iran.

Its external debt was estimated at more than \$10 billion in 1997, which it is repaying at the rate of \$645 million a year.

Lebanese government accused of inaction

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon's new government is squandering its chance to make vital reforms and has damaged the economy by failing to promote the country abroad, the Beirut Chamber of Commerce has said.

"Of course the content of the budget is important, the timing of the budget is important," Robert Debbas, vice president of the chamber, said of the delay in a new financial plan. "But the most important thing in our view is the marketing of Lebanon."

Debbas said the business community had hoped the government of Prime Minister Selim Al Hoss, which took office in December, would speed reforms neglected by former Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri while continuing his drive to restore Lebanon as a regional business centre.

"The previous government put the marketing of Lebanon and the sale of the potential of Lebanon

a bit ahead of the required improvements in laws and regulations," Debbas said in an interview with Reuters.

"We lost the marketing and unfortunately we did not start solving the main problems," he said of the new administration.

"This has disappointed all those who admired what has been done in Lebanon and this disappointment has caused the freezing of the economic situation," he added.

Debbas criticised the delay in a 1999 budget, originally planned for February and now caught inside the cabinet, saying the strategy would have to be similar to that in Hariri's last budget.

"So far the tough decisions are not coming because we have a feeling that the government, in spite of all the public support that it has, is still looking for popular decisions, which is not what we were expecting," Debbas said. "The longer that is delayed the credit is reduced."

Debbas said he wanted the government to curb its role in the economy, especially trimming a bloated public service, but did not want a freeze on Hariri's ambitious plans for rebuilding Lebanon from the 1975-90 civil war.

"If they don't want to take difficult decisions they are only going to put some makeup on the budget to improve its looks and to get a little more money from here and there," he said.

"We don't mind doing that, provided it comes out very quickly and we prepare a budget for the year 2000 which is a completely different structure," he added.

The government has been struggling with a budget deficit that was 43 per cent of spending last year. Servicing the public debt is taking up most of revenues.

"We are aware of the necessity of tax rises," Debbas said. "What we are hoping for is for the government to think solely

of the development of the economy, not in collecting taxes. Taxes will come from the growth of the gross domestic product and this is the only way to get more money," he stressed.

Debbas would not forecast growth this year, but said conditions were very difficult. The government has assumed growth in gross domestic product of 2-3 per cent, while private economists say it may be zero.

Despite attempts by the government to lower expectations — which Debbas termed undermining the dream that keeps Lebanese going — he was optimistic investors would return once they saw opportunities had not changed.

"We think Lebanon is a must for this part of the world and if they didn't have it they would try to create it," Debbas said.

"During the (war) events in Lebanon they have tried to replace Lebanon but they did not succeed."

Exchange Rates Thursday, 25-03-99											
ACCESS 4648868											
CURRENCY	JORDANIAN DYNAR	SAUDI RYAL	U.S. DOLLAR	BAHRAIN DINAR	OMAN RYAL	QATAR RYAL	YEMEN RYAL	EGYPT POUND	LIBYAN DYNAR	IRAN RYAL	US DOLLAR
JORDANIAN DYNAR	1.0000	0.1888	0.1927	1.8780	1.8367	0.1945	2.3263	0.2077	0.2233	0.2233	0.2233
SAUDI RYAL	5.2977	1.0000	0.2029	9.9491	9.7411	0.2032	12.3246	1.1506	3.7513	3.7513	3.7513
U.S. DOLLAR	5.1853	0.5795	1.0000	9.7454	9.5416	1.0091	12.2716	1.0781	3.6740	3.6740	3.6740
BAHRAIN DINAR	0.5325	0.1005	0.1026	1.0000	0.9791	0.1035	1.2387	0.1108	2.3772	2.3772	2.3772
OMAN RYAL	0.5439	0.1027	0.1048	1.0214	1.0000	0.1058	1.2652	0.1135	2.3951	2.3951	2.3951
QATAR RYAL	5.1427	0.8707	0.8910	9.6578	9.4559	1.0000	11.9932	1.0694	3.6412	3.6412	3.6412
YEMEN RYAL	0.4299	0.0811	0.0826	8.8073	8.7904	0.0836	1.0000	0.0893	3.3444	3.3444	3.3444
EGYPT POUND	4.8136	0.8086	0.8276	9.0398	8.8508	0.9260	11.1976	1.0553	15.2390	15.2390	15.2390
LIBYAN DYNAR	21.2147	4.0045	4.0882	38.8408	39.0079	4.1252	49.3511	4.4273	12.2300	12.2300	12.2300
IRAN RYAL	1.4124	0.2686	0.2722	2.6526	2.5971	0.2746	3.2851	0.2954	1.7919	1.7919	1.7919
US DOLLAR	0.8623	0.1628	0.1662	1.5194	1.5855	0.1677	2.0259	0.1791	0.6105	0.6105	0.6105
GERMAN MARK	2.5379	0.4792	0.4891	4.7650	4.8654	0.4935	5.9037	0.5272	1.7983	1.7983	1.7983
SWITZERLAND FRAN	2.0661	0.3900	0.3981	3.8801	3.7990	0.4018	4.8063	0.4292	1.4628	1.4628	1.4628
FRANCE FRANC	8.5109	1.6085	1.6401	15.8533	15.6491	1.6550	19.7986	1.7621	5.2271	5.2271	5.2271
JAPAN YEN	1.6702	0.3163	0.3219	3.1366	3.0710	0.3248	3.8853	0.3470	1.1626	1.1626	1.1626
HOLLAND GILDER	2.5593	0.5397	0.5510	5.3688	5.2575	0.5560	6.6516	0.5842	2.0244	2.0244	2.0244
SPAIN POUND	11.8405	2.1973	2.2432	21.8507	21.4037	2.2635	27.9790	2.4193	8.2415	8.2415	8.2415
CYPRUS POUND	25.1234	4.7423	4.8414	47.1814	46.1950	4.8853	58.4439	5.2192	17.7874	17.7874	17.7874
INDONESIA RUPIAH	52.3432	9.8803	10.0868	98.2997	96.2446	10.1782	121.7644	10.8741	31.0530	31.0530	31.0530
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	2.2194	0.4189	0.4277	4.1680	4.0809	0.4316	5.1626	0.4811	1.5713	1.5713	1.5713
GREEK DRACHMA	4.2133	0.7953	0.8119	7.9125	7.7470	0.8193	9.8012	0.8753	2.5830	2.5830	2.5830
ITALY LIRA	0.7516	0.1419	0.1448	1.4114	1.3819	0.1461	1.7483	0.1851	0.5521	0.5521	0.5521
BELGIUM FRANC	17.5532	3.3700	3.4404	33.3281	32.8272	3.4718	41.5375	3.7282	12.6421	12.6421	12.6421
NETHERLANDS GILDER	2.1538	0.4026	0.4110	4.0053	3.9216	0.4147	4.9614	0.4437	1.4000	1.4000	1.4000
CANADA DOLLAR	1.2974	0.2449	0.2502	2.4364	2.3855	0.2523	3.0180	0.2635	0.7785	0.7785	0.7785
EURO											

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDANIAN DYNAR											
CURRENCY	US DOLLAR	GERMAN MARK	SWITZERLAND FRAN	FRANCE FRANC	JAPAN YEN	HOLLAND GILDER	ITALY LIRA	NETHERLANDS GILDER	SPAIN POUND	INDONESIA RUPIAH	EURO
US DOLLAR	1.0000	1.6380	0.5565	0.6836	0.1850	0.8457	2.4940	5.5220	1.3687	1.7983	1.7983
GERMAN MARK	0.6105	1.0000	0.3388	0.4174	0.1013	0.5163	6.3216	3.4322	3.5647	10.1918	10.1918
SWITZERLAND FRAN	1.7983	2.9432	1.0000	1.2595	0.2862	0.8876	19.1018	1.8562	1.8562	58.2298	58.2298
FRANCE FRANC	1.5855	0.8141	0.7911	1.0000	0.2428	1.2370	9.7226	8.2298	1.5855	1.5855	1.5855
JAPAN YEN	5.2271	3.7513	3.5234	4.1193	1.0000	5.0657	2.9785	33.8762	9.5802	58.2298	58.2298
HOLLAND GILDER	11.8405	182.8835	85.8114	80.8381	19.8243	1.0000	58.4124	684.7994	128.7388	58.2298	58.2298
SPAIN POUND	2.0244	3.3180	1.1287	1.3839	0.3260	1.7120	1.0000	11.3811	2.0244	58.2298	58.2298
INDONESIA RUPIAH	8.2415	13.4896	4.5895	5.8341	1.3677	9.5996	4.0711	46.3334	8.2415	58.2298	58.2298
ITALY LIRA	17.7874	29.1358	9.8655	12.5598	2.8819	15.9422	8.7885	1.0000	17.7874	58.2298	58.2298
BELGIUM FRANC	37.0590	60.7029	20.8501	26.3598	6.1822	31.3399	18.3082	208.3441	42.3491	58.2298	58.2298
NETHERLANDS GILDER	1.5713	2.5726	0.8745	1.0742	0.2508	1.3288	0.7782	1.0000	1.5713	58.2298	58.2298
GREEK DRACHMA	2.5830	4.8862	1.6602	2.0392	0.4950	2.5229	4.7335	16.7723	2.5830	58.2298	58.2298
CYPRUS POUND	0.5321	0.8716	0.2961	0.3638	0.0883	0.4000	0.2526	2.9914	0.5321	58.2298	58.2298
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	12.6421	21.7545	7.0548	8.5410	2.0777	10.8893	6.2438	71.2921	13.7613	58.2298	58.2298
CANADA DOLLAR	1.5100	2.4734	0.8464	1.0323	0.2506	1.2770	2.7459	8.8892	1.5100	58.2298	58.2298
EURO	0.9185	1.5045	0.5112	0.6279	0.1524	0.7768	3.4337	5.1639	1.0000	58.2298	58.2298

CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN											
NOTE: NEITHER ACCESS NOR THE PUBLISHER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY ERRORS OR MISAGES											
DEPOSIT INTEREST RATES											
CURRENCY	1 M	3 M	6 M	1 YEAR	2 YEAR	3 YEAR	4 YEAR	5 YEAR	10 YEAR	15 YEAR	20 YEAR
US DOLLAR	4.5000	4.5000	4.5000	4.5000	4.5000	4.5000	4.5000	4.5000	4.5000	4.5000	4.5000
GERMAN MARK	5.1000	5.1000	5.1000	5.1000	5.1000	5.1000	5.1000	5.1000	5.1000	5.1000	5.1000
NETHERLANDS GILDER	2.3750	2.3750	2.3750	2.3750	2.3750	2.3750	2.3750	2.3750	2.3750	2.3750	2.3750
FRANCE FRANC	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
SWITZERLAND FRAN	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
JAPAN YEN	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

WORLD STOCK MARKETS											
STOCK MARKET	INDEX	CLOSING	LAST	CHANGE	PRECIOUS METALS	METAL	ASK	BID	PRICE	ASK	BID
FRANKFURT	DAI	4780.13	4775.00	-104.80	GOLD	333.75	334.25	333.75	SILVER	5.06	5.08
HONG KONG	HANG SENG	10711.34	10641.01	-329.07	PLATINUM	371.00	373.00	371.00			
LONDON	FT-100	6016.70	6080.50	+63.80							
NEW YORK	DJ INDUSTR	9686.84	9671.83	-4.90							
NEW YORK	NYSE COMPOSITE	586.58	585.45	-1.14							
NEW YORK	AMEX COMPOSITE	703.80	703.31	-0.29							
NEW YORK	S&P 500	1268.58	1262.14	-6.45							
TOKYO	NIKKEI 225	15868.04	15816.47	-470.87							
TAIPEI	CASE-60	4059.18	4079.47	+21.31							

THE Daily Crossword

Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

1 Du Maurier classic
8 Half-eagle half-lion creature
15 Striking
16 Day-to-day grid
17 "Hunters in the Snow" painter
18 Guts
19 Sci. class
20 Like speedy service
22 Small nowt
23 Make eyes at
25 Not spoken
26 Essential part
27 "Two" in "Another Town"
29 Also not
30 More down?
31 Ford tops
33 Plato's teacher
35 Hoodwink
37 Rejections
38 Diana Ross film
42 Sun seed
46 Shaffer play
47 Dam-building grp.
49 County of SW England
50 "Charlie's" Band
51 Small birds
53 Actress
54 Diplomat
55 Hammarkidold
56 Competed in a tiling match
57 Deliquit need
58 Noted speakers
60 Lacking serviceability
62 Most shrewy and thin
64 African wildcat
65 Gives the go-ahead
66 Theater troupe

6 Slip-prevention device
7 Brothers Band
8 Field of Jets
9 Charged
10 Miniature
11 Part of TIGF
12 Gradually disappearing effect
13 Like navigable northern waterways
14 Homemakers, of a sort
21 Writer Umberto's family
24 Just managed
26 School groups
28 Snaillike gastropods
30 Bear offspring
32 Hot tub
34 Comic Bill, informally
36 Consigns
38 Grassroots locations?

39 Fish tanks
40 St. Stephen's kingdom
41 Actor Montand
43 Cupidity
44 Designed with standard units
45 Paint choices
48 Shenanigans
51 Of less quality
52 French legislative body
55 "Pal"
56 "matter (brain covering)"
59 Shakespearean contraction
61 Label

Peanuts

After I hit seventy-one home runs, I'll sell the ball for three million dollars.

How does the worst player in the history of the game expect to hit seventy-one home runs?

I've never seen a sky look quite so blue, have you?

Andy Capp

Sorry, I'm so late again, pet. As a matter of fact, I'm not here. I've just left.

Mutt'n' Jeff

Doctor, why is our bill so high?

Well, Mrs. Mutt, I made nine visits when Cicero had the measles!

I charged you only \$5 a visit that's \$45.

I think that's too much money.

Oh, and why do you think so?</

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Arab Bank Ltd. sees net profit growing to JD139 million at the end of 1999

THE ARAB Bank Ltd. expects net profit to grow by 10 per cent this year to reach JD139 million after recording a JD126.5 million in 1998 and JD107.7 million in 1997. Before taxes, the profit stood at JD166.3 million last year compared to JD145.6 million in 1997. The Arab Bank Group envisages net profit at the end of this year at \$241 million, eight per cent higher than the \$223.7 million registered at the end of last year. At the end of 1997, the net profit of the Arab Bank Group amounted to \$203.8 million.

Noting that net interest is the main source of the bank's profit, the amount collected in 1998 reached JD273.4 million, JD461 million or 20 per cent higher than the net interest earned in 1997. Net interest represented 77 per cent of the total earnings and was followed by income from commissions which amounted to JD69.3 million compared to JD63.8 million earned during 1997.

According to the 1998 annual report, "the bank seeks to consolidate its income sources other than net interest, through introducing new services and products outside the traditional activity of the bank." The report mentioned in this regard investment funds and portfolios and other private banking services.

Along the same lines, the 1998 annual report said the bank's administration continued during 1998 "to invest in the future" and that resulted in higher administrative and general expenses which rose by 14.3 per cent, or JD23.6 million, from JD165.2 million at the end of 1997 to JD188.8 million at the end of 1998. "This increase is highly reasonable compared to the growth in the rest of the elements of the financial position," the report said stressing that the controlling and monitoring spending remains an important element of the management operations and will continue to receive special attention at all times.

The bank's balance sheet at the end of last year showed total client deposits at JD7,957.8 million, 9.8 per cent or JD709 million higher than the JD7,248.8 million total at the end of 1997. The port-

folio of loans and credit facilities reached JD4,935.5 million, a 5.6 per cent or JD263.1 million growth over the JD4,672 million total at the end of 1997. "The bank maintained high liquidity rates which is a traditional policy followed by the bank as cash and quasi money represented 53.1 per cent of the total assets. The rate in 1997 was 51.4 per cent," the bank said.

Board Chairman Abdul Majeed Shorman told the general assembly that following its approval of the allocation of dividends as recommended by the board, the shareholders' equity will rise to JD820 million compared to JD720 million at the end of 1997. He indicated that all the measures for doubling the bank's capital were completed and the capital now stands at JD88 million spread of 8.8 million shares. "This is the fourth time that the shareholder was given free bonus shares in addition to the dividends that were distributed in previous years," Shorman said. Additional figures showed the bank's earnings totalled JD355 million last year compared to JD310 million in 1997. Operational expenses were JD188.8 million and JD165.2 million respectively. Total assets stood at JD11,743 million last year compared to JD10,761 million at the end of 1997. The bank paid JD39.8 million of income tax in 1998 (JD37.9 million in 1997).

As for the Arab Bank Group, total deposits reached JD10,412 million (JD9,630 million in 1997) and total shareholders equity stood at JD1,754.1 million (JD1,570.9 million in 1997). Earnings totalled \$615.5 million compared to \$577.5 million. Net profit after tax came to \$223.7 million (\$203.8 million in 1997).

The general assembly approved the distribution of dividends at a rate of 30 per cent or JD3 per share. The JD26.4 million in dividends were JD8.8 million over the amount distributed in 1997. The general assembly also authorised the bank to issue debentures transferable to shares by amending the bank's articles of association and internal regulations (Al Ra'i + Al Dstour + Al Aswaj).

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, MARCH 29, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You're drawing a lot of attention today, and most of it's favourable. You're looking very good, and that's important, because its kind of like you're on display. You're putting on a performance for a very critical audience. The good news is, they love you.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Somebody else is being pushed, and you're getting pushed as a result. Its the domino effect, with a slight difference. You don't like being pushed and don't respond well to that sort of stimulation. The other person has the enthusiasm, but you have the common sense and the experience, so make your opinion known.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Love and marriage sure go together, and if your love affair needs a commitment, this is a good day to make it. Looks like a friend may want to upgrade to a more intimate status, and that would sure do the trick. Don't wait for the other person to make the first move. If you think its right, do that yourself.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) Some say its whom you know that helps you become successful. Others say its what you know that does the trick. For you today, its both. A marvellous opportunity could become available. If someone you trust recommends it, just say yes.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) How long has it been since you and your favourite person had a real vacation? If the answer is never, what's the problem? Lack of money? Or lack of priority? If you make Paris in the spring a higher priority than, say, drinking beer and eating pretzels, could you make it happen? Working together, you might.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) This looks like an excellent day to make an investment. Put your money in a place where it can grow, without too much risk, of course. Although you have to act quickly, you should not act impulsively. Do the homework first. This is not a gamble. Its a strategy.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Sometimes you're the best person to carry out a job, but not always. Today, for example, it looks like somebody else has better skills than you do for a specific task that must be done. Instead of trying to learn how to do it yourself, simply delegate. The time you save will be worth the money.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You and a friend really ought to think about going into business for yourselves. You could think of lots of jobs for other people to do, and that's the basis of being a good entrepreneur. Now all you have to do is think of a way to sell what they produce and you've got it made.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Your assignment for today is to be perfect, or as near as you can manage. At first you might think its impossible to meet another's expectations, but actually, it could turn out to be fun. Think of it as a game, and you're going for the championship. If you win, you get more than the prize. You get respect from a person you admire.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) This is another good day for love, and this time, travel may be required. You definitely need to get into an area with which you are slightly unfamiliar. Something unusual — a different neighbourhood, a different language — will add to the thrill. You may end up at your house, but getting there will be more than half the fun.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) One of your best ideas is in danger of being shot down today. Somebody's going to be asking highly detailed questions — how can this work? How much will it cost? etc. Its not really going to be a problem if you have all the answers prepared. If you don't, maybe you'd better get busy on that first.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) There's another indication today that money is coming into your account, possibly quite a lot. It comes partially because you've taken a critical partner's suggestions to heart. The closer you come to being perfect, the more money you'll see. What you're doing is being noticed, by the way, by people in high places.

Birthingstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

U.S. desperately seeks skilled immigrants

WASHINGTON (AFP) — With a booming economy and ever tightening labour markets, the United States is desperately seeking skilled immigrants — so much so that some lawmakers are thinking of changing immigration criteria.

"There is an obvious mismatch between the preponderance of the current immigration flow and the direction of the American economy," according to

James Edwards, author of The Congressional Politics of Immigration Reform.

"The immigration system must change," he told a House of Representatives subcommittee on immigration this week.

Industries in some of the fastest growing sectors of the U.S. economy — computers, telecommunications and health care — are struggling to find qualified workers, he said.

Appearing before the same committee, William Archey, president of the American Electronics Association, warned that the "future growth of the U.S. high-technology industry, the most prosperous industry in the world, is threatened by a limited supply of skilled workers."

He cited a February 1998 study that found that American students in their final year of secondary school placed 19th in mathematics in a survey of 21 countries and 16th in science.

Archey said many of those hired out of U.S. universities by high-tech firms were non-Americans.

In 1996, thirty eight per cent of Master of Science degrees in computer science awarded by U.S. universities went to foreign students. Forty six per cent of PhD degrees in the discipline went to non-U.S. citizens — who later encounter

difficulties obtaining visas to work in the United States.

At the same time, according to congressional statistics, the skill level of immigrants relative to U.S. citizens has been declining for years.

"Some 300,000 legal immigrants without high school educations arrive each year," said Representative Lamar Smith, at a time when "nine out of ten new jobs will require more than a high school education."

University of Illinois economics researcher Barry Chiswick told the committee "the large surplus of low skill immigrants depresses wages and increases inequality and poverty."

He called for "a more market-oriented approach" to immigration. "We should reduce emphasis on who you are related to and put more emphasis on what use the

individual can be to the U.S. economy."

Chiswick and other experts testifying here called for new standards for immigration, notably educational achievement, ability to speak and understand English, the education level of the spouse.

A skilled immigrant is "better equipped to create wealth and jobs, better equipped for economic success and less likely to become charges," said Edwards.

But certain committee members took issue with such an approach, fearing it would lessen chances for many immigrants to realise "the American dream" and achieve economic security.

They recalled members of their own families — grandfathers and fathers — who arrived in the United States with nothing more than their courage and a willingness to work hard.

Trading doubles, prices rise at stock exchange

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Amman Stock Exchange's general price index recorded a slight increase during last week trading which doubled the weekly bulletin showed Sunday.

The two-page report indicated that the stock market's price index closed 0.91 point higher at 182.71 points compared to 181.87 points.

The weekly turnover amounted to JD6.2 million compared to JD3.1 million in the previous week, the report indicated.

It showed that the stock market's major blue chips recorded increase in their prices, especially the Arab Bank, which accounted for almost 25 per cent of the bourse turnover, followed

by the Jordan Phosphate Mines and the Arab Potash companies.

The industrial, banking and services sectors recorded increase in their price index, 0.91, 0.35 and 0.19 points respectively.

The bulletin showed that the industrial sector won half of the bourse's turnover, or JD3.1 million, where trading focused on mining and pharmaceutical industries.

The Jordan Phosphate Mines ranked first with a turnover amounting to JD801,926 followed by the Arab Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Company and the International Tobacco Company for JD492,775 and JD473,189 respectively.

The Arab Bank, the stock market's major blue chip

ranked first among commercial banks with a turnover amounting to JD1.5 million. The bank's share price closed at JD220.

The services sector turnover amounted to JD226,052, where trading focused on the Jordan Electric Power Company and the National Portfolio Company.

Out of the 59 firms that were traded on the floor, 25 firms recorded increase in their prices, 20 registered decrease and 14 others remained unchanged.

The parallel market turnover amounted to JD1.4 million, where the National and Multinational Engineering ranked first among the firms that were traded in this sector last week, with a turnover totalling JD461,012.

Alstom, ABB merge energy units — turnover of \$10.89 billion

PARIS (AFP) — Engineering giants Alstom and Asea Brown Boveri (ABB) said this week they would merge their energy operations to form one of the world's biggest power and generator producers.

The two firms will each hold a 50 per cent stake in the new unit, which will be called ABB Alstom Power, Alstom, a Franco-British subsidiary of France's Alcatel, said in a statement.

Alstom will hand ABB, a Swiss-Swedish group, a \$1.5 billion cash payment (1.4 billion euros) to compensate for the different sizes of the two companies. Energy production activities at ABB represent a turnover

of 7.2 billion euros, compared to 2.7 billion euros at Alstom. ABB Alstom Power's turnover, on the basis of 1998 figures, would be 9.9 billion euros (\$10.89 billion), it said.

Improvements in efficiency and productivity and economies of scale are expected to produce cost savings of about 400 million euros (\$450 million) within several years, the statement said.

"Over the next three to four years the objective is to substantially increase the joint company's margins and to achieve above-average profitability," the two firms said.

The merger is subject to regulatory approval and should take place "by July," an Alstom

spokesman told AFP.

"We are convinced that ABB Alstom Power will be successful," ABB president and chief executive officer, Goeran Lindahl, said in the statement.

"It will, in short, be the most complete power generation company in the world," he added. Lindahl is to become chairman of the new group's supervisory board. The new company, to be headquartered in Brussels, will comprise all of Alstom's energy sector activities, including industrial gas turbines but excluding its heavy duty gas turbines that are based on production arrangements with General Electric (GE) of the United States.

Novartis net profit rises 16%

BASEL, Switzerland (AFP) — Novartis has reported a 16 per cent rise in 1998 net profit to 6.06 billion Swiss francs (3.7 billion euros, \$4.1 billion), helped by large merger cost savings and gains in financial income.

The full-year results were the second since the creation of the Swiss pharmaceutical group Novartis from the merger of Ciba and Sandoz in 1996.

Sales in the year rose by two per cent in Swiss franc terms to 31.7 billion Swiss francs.

Novartis said it was reaping the benefits of significant synergies made possible by the merger. By the end of 1998, the firm had realised cost savings of 1.7 billion Swiss francs, amounting to 89 per cent of the planned three-year total and exceeding last year's targets.

In the key healthcare sector, revenues rose three per cent to 17.5 billion Swiss francs.

Sandimmun and Neoral continued as the "gold standard" for use in transplantations, fetching 1.85 billion Swiss francs. Other big sellers included Aredia for cancer, Cibacen for hypertension, Foradil for asthma and Miacalcin for osteoporosis.

A.S.E TRADE ACCESS 4648868 Thursday, 25-03-99				
Company	Open	Close	Change	
BANKS				
ARAB BK	220.000	220.000	0.00%	
INTL BK	1.230	1.230	0.00%	
BE OF JORDAN	1.270	1.270	0.00%	
INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK	1.270	1.270	0.00%	
THE JORDANIAN BK	2.840	2.840	0.00%	
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1.880	1.870	-0.05%	
JO. INVEST. BK	1.330	1.330	0.00%	
JO. INTL. BK	0.800	0.800	0.00%	
PAWLADEL PHA BK	0.830	0.830	0.00%	
BANKS INDEX	286.340	POINT	+0.12%	
INSURANCE				
JO. FRENCH INS	2.590	2.490	-0.04%	
INSURANCE INDEX	124.400	POINT	-0.88%	
SERVICES				
ELECTRIC POWER	1.680	1.680	0.00%	
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0.940	0.940	0.00%	
AL-YAT	7.100	7.100	0.00%	
COMMODORE	1.100	1.070	-0.27%	
AL-JORDAN FOR BUS	0.980	0.970	-0.02%	
AL-JORDAN FOR INVEST & ED	1.840	1.830	-0.05%	
UNIFIED LAND TRACS	1.030	1.030	0.00%	
SERVICES INDEX	111.880	POINT	+0.02%	
INDUSTRY				
CEMENT	3.630	3.640	+0.28%	
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TOMCO & CHARTER	1.880	1.880	0.00%	
INTL STEEL	0.880	0.870	-0.11%	
JO. AL DAWA	6.100	6.100	0.00%	
MODEL EAST COMPOD	0.880	0.880	0.00%	
JO. STEEL	1.010	1.010	0.00%	
AL-JORDAN STEEL	1.010	1.010	0.00%	
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AL-JORDAN CHEMICAL	0.970	0.970	0.00%	
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EL-ZAY	1.240	1.220	-1.61%	
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AL-JORDAN FINANCIAL INVS	0.880	0.880	0.00%	
AL-JORDAN	0.880	0.880	0.00%	
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AL DAWLA	0.740	0.710	-4.05%	
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OPTICAL ARAB	0.880	0.870	-1.14%	
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MIDDLE EAST PHAR	0.820	0.820	0.00%	
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Krajicek recovers to beat French giantkiller

It's an all-Williams final in Lipton

KEY BISCAINE (AFP) — Dutchman Richard Krajicek captured his 17th career title here Saturday when he outlasted 20-year-old French giantkiller Sebastien Grosjean in four sets in the final of the ATP Lipton Championships.

In the hottest session of the 10-day tournament, the towering 6ft 5in (1m96) Dutch seventh-seed scored a 4-6, 6-1, 6-2, 7-5 victory — ending the 2hrs 40mins showdown with his 24th ace.

The win was worth a \$360,000 top prize. Krajicek, the 1996 Wimbledon champion, struggled with stomach problems for much of the week. But he fought through the discomfort and stayed very much in charge in the second and third sets to claim his first United States title since a 1993 Los Angeles triumph.

Saturday's win ensures Krajicek will rise three places to fourth when the ATP rankings are published on Monday.

"Today the title was much more important than the ranking move," Krajicek said after his victory. "I was really struggling. I don't what happened. Since Thursday morning I haven't been eating well. It has weakened my system. I was hitting some nice shots but after I did something I needed to recuperate. I needed to play economically."

Krajicek, who never advanced past the quarterfinals at the event before, has now won two titles this year following his success in London last month.

Grosjean, who ended Carlos Moya's hopes of extending his reign as the new world number-one in the fourth-round on Monday, saved five break points in the fifth game of the third set but finally succumbed on the sixth — a fierce forehand by Krajicek kicked so hard that the Frenchman could only tap into the net.

It gave Krajicek a 3-2 lead and he never looked back.

He held his own serve and then broke Grosjean again with two impressive running efforts — a sprint



Richard Krajicek of the Netherlands holds up the trophy after defeating Sebastien Grosjean in the men's final, at the Lipton Championships Tournament. Krajicek won the match 4-6, 6-1, 6-2, 7-5 (AFP photo)



Sebastien Grosjean of France reacts to a missed point against Richard Krajicek during the Lipton men's final in Key Biscayne, Florida (AFP photo)

into a crosscourt forehand winner and a rush to the net to put away a drop shot.

Krajicek's next break came on a forehand winner to pull ahead 3-2 in the fourth set but Grosjean broke back to 4-4 on a double fault by Krajicek and had set point on Krajicek's serve before the Dutchman hit a winning overhead to hold to 5-5.

That swung momentum for the final time. Grosjean sent a forehand wide to surrender a break and Krajicek held serve for the victory.

Krajicek had won their only prior meeting when Grosjean retired from their second-round match last year at Marseille, the Frenchman's hometown, with a sprained ankle.

Grosjean won the pivotal break of the first set to go ahead 4-3 when Krajicek sent a backhand into the net. The Frenchman held serve twice to claim the set, the final time at love.

Krajicek broke Grosjean's first serve of the second set and held serve to lead 4-1. The Dutchman then amassed three break points and pulled ahead 5-1 when Grosjean sent an overhead smash into the net.

Grosjean battled back with two break points in the seventh game, but Krajicek saved them with an ace and a forehand winner. Krajicek slammed his 10th ace of the match three points later, then followed with a service winner to capture the set.

It was Grosjean's first appearance in an ATP final and he was the first unseeded Lipton finalist since David Wheaton in 1991. He was also the youngest player to reach the final here since Michael Chang won in 1992.

KEY BISCAINE (AP) — Sisters Venus and Serena Williams scored an impressive sweep and will meet in an unprecedented family final in the Lipton Championships.

Serena came from behind in both sets to beat top-ranked Martina Hingis of Switzerland, 6-4, 7-6 (7-3). Three hours later, Venus completed a 6-4, 6-2 victory over five-time Lipton champion Steffi Graf of Germany.

The all-sister women's final will be the first since the Open era began in 1968. When asked who would win, Venus said: "A Williams."

Serena rallied from a 4-0 deficit against Hingis to earn her 16th consecutive victory. She needs one more for her third tournament title in a row.

"I've worked really hard all my life since I was 4 years old," said Serena, 17. "There comes a time you have to start winning. All my hard work is finally paying off."

Venus, 18, showed a new dimension in her powerful game by playing

patiently and waiting for Graf to make mistakes.

Williams dominated from the start, taking a 3-0 lead in each set, and broke Graf's serve six times.

Hingis, 2-0 previously against Serena Williams, was simply overpowered this time. Hingis' serve is the weakest part of her game, and the muscular Williams took advantage by repeatedly ripping return winners.

But Williams also was erratic. She made nine backhand errors in one game alone, an 18-point marathon. The margin was lopsided in her column for both unforced errors (49-14) and winners (48-11).

Williams lost 13 consecutive points in the early going, setting the tone for her streaky performance.

"I was like, 'OK, when do you start playing?'" Hingis said.

"She was just too confident. She thought I would miss everything."

After Hingis won the first four games, Williams won the next eight.

Hingis then won five in a row for a 5-2 lead in the second set before Williams began her final charge.

She broke Hingis' serve to reach 6-6, hit three consecutive forehand winners in the tiebreaker and slammed yet another to close out the match. Williams then broke into a grin, raised both hands and staggered across the court, as if overwhelmed by her achievement.

"I guess it's my biggest win," she said. "I've never beaten the No. 1 player before, now that you mention it."

"She played a great match," Hingis said. "It's a good time for her, not for me."

Despite the defeat, Hingis will remain No. 1 when the new rankings are released next week. Second-ranked Lindsay Davenport of the United States withdrew from the tournament because of a sprained wrist after reaching the quarterfinals.

Clippers cut Malone, Stockton down to size

LOS ANGELES (R) — Karl Malone and John Stockton were held to single digits in scoring for the first time in more than 11 years as the lowly Los Angeles Clippers posted an amazing 103-77 victory Saturday over the Utah Jazz.

Despite having the worst record in the NBA, the Clippers (3-24) made their third win of the season a memorable one as rookie Tyrone Nesby scored 14 of his 16 points in the first half to help push the Clippers into a 52-32 advantage by the intermission.

Los Angeles was never threatened in the second half by the two-time defending Western Conference champion Jazz (21-7), whose lead atop the Midwest Division shrank to 1 1/2 games over the Houston Rockets.

Malone finished with seven points on 1-of-7 shooting before being ejected after picking up his second technical foul with 9:44 left in the third quarter. Stockton scored just three points in 15 minutes.

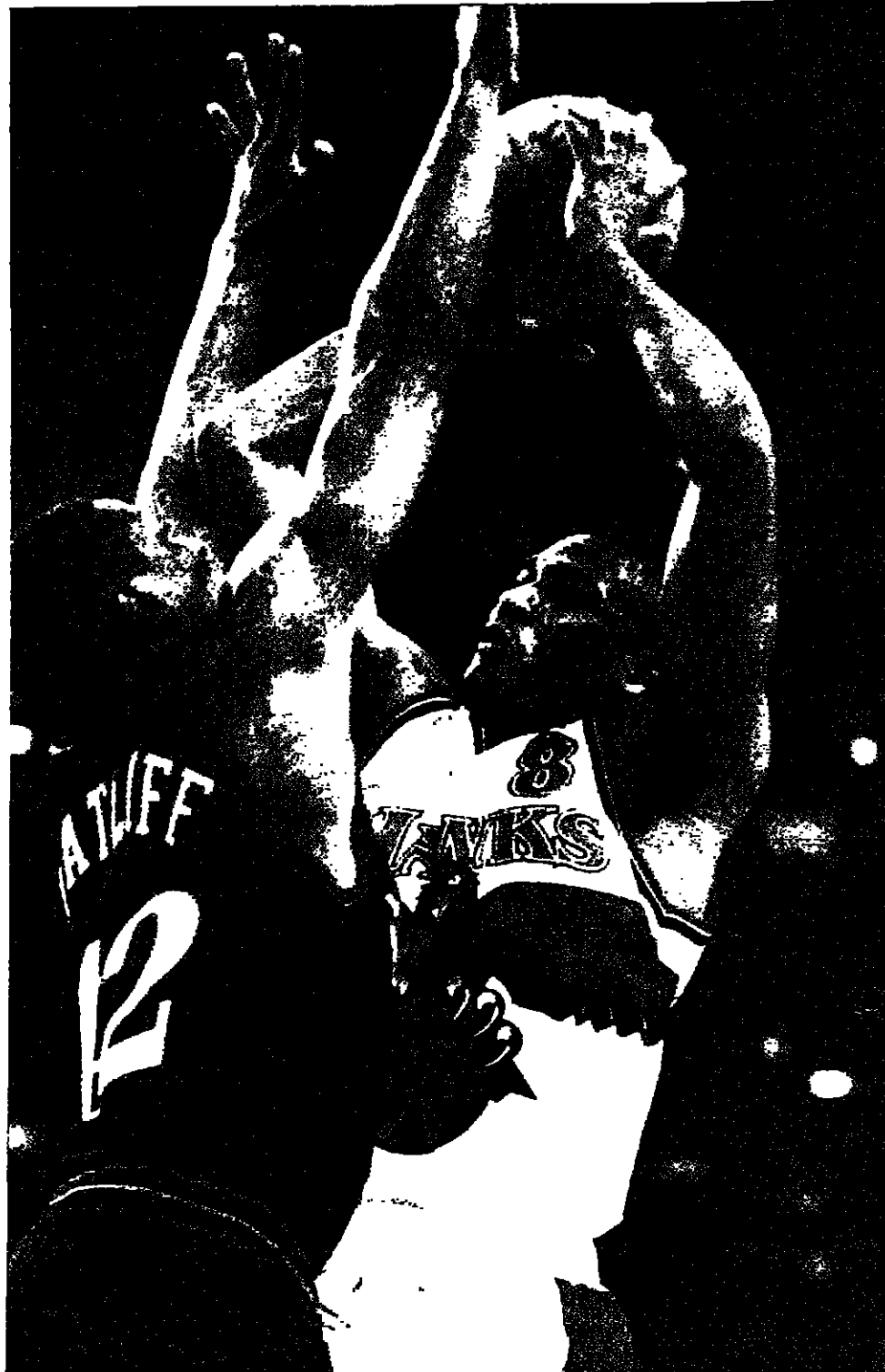
It was the first time since November 21, 1987 that both Malone and Stockton were held in single digits in scoring in the same game.

Eric Piatkowski tallied 23 points to lead the Clippers.

"The nice thing is everyone played well, and for U.S. to win, we all have to play well," Piatkowski said. "Our defensive intensity, our crashing the boards and our getting blocks all proved tonight that we can play with anyone in this league."

The Jazz came into the contest with the second best record in the league, but left with their third loss in their last four road games.

In Oakland, Hakeem Olajuwon led the way with 29 points as the Houston Rockets rallied from a 19-point deficit and extended their winning streak to seven games with an 87-86 victory over the Golden State Warriors.



Atlanta Hawks Steve Smith (R) tries to shoot over the top of Philadelphia 76ers Theo Ratliff in Atlanta, Georgia (AFP photo)

Charles Barkley scored 24 points and grabbed 11 rebounds while Hakeem Olajuwon scored 29 points and Scottie Pippen added 16 and nine assists for the Rockets.

Houston outscored the Warriors 35-14 over a 17-minute span bridging the third and fourth quarters.

Antawn Jamison scored 23 points for Golden State.

In Atlanta, Theo Ratliff missed a pair of crucial free throws, setting the stage for Tyrone Corbin's game-tying 3-pointer with 0.2 seconds left that enabled the Atlanta Hawks to force an overtime period in a 103-99 win over Philadelphia.

Corbin drained a long bank shot to send the game into overtime. "It was a fortunate shot," admitted

Corbin. "I threw it up high. It hit the backboard and I was fortunate enough to have it go in." Allen Iverson led the Sixers with 24 points.

In San Antonio, Tim Duncan and the San Antonio Spurs bounced back from a disappointing performance to notch a 99-77 victory over the Dallas Mavericks.

Duncan collected 21 points and 15 rebounds and led six players that scored in double figures for the Spurs, who were coming off a home loss to the Toronto Raptors.

At New Jersey, the New Jersey Nets managed one of their best offensive performances of the year but still suffered a 109-99 loss to the Cleveland Cavaliers. Shawn Kemp scored 26

points and Brevin Knight added 17 for the Cavaliers, who outscored the Nets 20-10 over the final six minutes.

Stephon Marbury scored 26 points and Chris Carr contributed 19 and nine rebounds for the Nets, who played without leading scorer Keith Van Horn, sidelined by a sprained right ankle.

In Denver, Mitch Richmond led five players in double figures with 29 points as the Washington Wizards cruised to a 112-100 victory over the floundering Denver Nuggets.

The Nuggets suffered their fourth straight loss and 15th in 17 games despite 39 points and 12 rebounds by Antonio McDyess.

Fulham willing to release Keegan — Al Fayed

LONDON (AFP) — Fulham owner Mohamed Al Fayed was Sunday reported as being willing to release England coach Kevin Keegan from his contract with the runaway English second division leaders.

Keegan agreed to take the England job only for four matches because his Fulham contract runs for another 18 months and he promised Al Fayed he would honour it.

But Al Fayed told the Sunday Mirror he will let Keegan go if the former England forward changes his mind about doing the national team job permanently.

Keegan's reign began on Saturday afternoon with a 3-1 win over Poland at Wembley which revived hopes of qualification for the 2000 European championships.

Al Fayed told the Sunday Mirror: "If the nation wants Kevin, the ordinary person wants Kevin and the FA wants Kevin then I will give him to England, no problem."

"The nation comes first, the glory of the country — and that's the sacrifice we will make at Fulham."

"I will leave it with Kevin — he is the guy who has to make the decision."

"If he wants to stay with Fulham, wonderful. But if the FA can't find a replacement at the time his four-game run ends and he wants to go he can leave with my blessing."

The FA initially tried to persuade Keegan to become Glenn Hoddle's permanent successor.

But Keegan agreed to take charge only for the Poland game, a friendly in Hungary on April 28 and two more Euro 2000 qualifiers — at home to Sweden on June 5 and away to Bulgaria four days later.

Although Al Fayed would be prepared to let Keegan go in the summer he admits it would be a wrench.

"Kevin is a very special man. England's gain would be Fulham's loss," he said.

Keegan on Sunday indicated there could be a chance of him staying on after June.

"There might be a solution somewhere but I'm not going to look for that yet because I don't think it's the right time," he said.

"I mean, who knows in the future? I'm not going to be rude to everybody and say to the England fans 'that's it, I don't care.'"

"What I'm saying is that we struck a deal, that's what I want to stick to at the moment and then let's see."

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Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.



Italian Antonio Conte jubilates after scoring to 2-1 in the Euro 2000 Group 1 qualifier between Denmark and Italy in Parken in Copenhagen. Italy won the match 2-1 (AFP photo)

Kosovo conflict postpones more Euro 2000 games

PARIS (AFP) — The crisis in Kosovo has forced UEFA to postpone two more European Championships qualifying matches in the Balkans, it was announced Sunday.

The Malta v Croatia match in Group Eight, scheduled to be played in Zagreb on Wednesday, has been postponed until August 18.

The Croatian coach, Josip Illic, and players from both sides had expressed their fears about playing at a time when Croatia risks being pulled into the conflict.

Two other Group Eight matches — Macedonia v Ireland and Yugoslavia v Croatia — were postponed last week.

The Ireland match has been re-scheduled for October 9, while Yugoslavia v Croatia is now set for August 18.

In Group Two, Slovenia's fixture against Albania in

Results of European Championship qualifying matches played Saturday:

• Group One			
Belarus	0	Switzerland	1
Denmark	1	Italy	2
• Group Two			
Georgia	1	Slovenia	1
Greece	0	Norway	2
• Group Three			
N. Ireland	0	Germany	3
Turkey	2	Moldova	0
• Group Four			
Armenia	0	Russia	3
France	0	Ukraine	0
Andorra	0	Iceland	2
• Group Five			
England	3	Poland	1
Sweden	2	Luxembourg	0
• Group Six			
Spain	9	Austria	0
• Group Seven			
Hungary	5	Liechtenstein	0
Romania	0	Slovakia	0
• Group Eight			
No games played because of Kosovo crisis			
• Group Nine			
Czech Rep.	2	Lithuania	0

Ljubljana on Wednesday has also been moved to August 18.

UEFA's main concern was the difficulty of players flying into the Balkans.

Euro 2000 qualifiers England and Germany answer the critics; Spain hit nine

PARIS (AFP) — England and Germany answered their critics in style with convincing wins in their Euro 2000 qualifiers Saturday but world champions France had goalkeeper Fabien Barthez to thank for preserving their unbeaten record at their Stade de France fortress.

Italy, meanwhile, kept up their 100 per cent record in group one with a 2-1 win in Denmark while Spain took apart a humiliated Austrian team, winning 9-0 in Valencia.

England convincingly beat Poland 3-1 at Wembley and Germany steamrollered Northern Ireland 3-0 in Belfast but Barthez, helped by unusually bad finishing from Ukraine's golden boy Andrei Shevchenko, helped France limp to a goalless draw against the group leaders.

Kevin Keegan had a dream baptism as stand-in England coach after a Paul Scholes hat-trick put the skids under the Poles, who had arrived as group leaders after winning their opening two games.

The win lifted England above the Poles to second in Group Five behind Sweden, who earlier were unconvincing in beating Luxembourg 2-0 in Gothenburg, finally prevailing with goals from Celtic strikers Johan Mjallby and Henrik Larsson.

German coach Erich Ribbeck was a relieved man after his under-pressure side, the defending European champions, crushed Northern Ireland at Windsor Park with two goals from Werder Bremen striker Marco Bode and a third by Dietmar Hamann of Newcastle.

The Germans, who opened their campaign with defeat in Turkey and smarting from a 3-0 humiliation in a recent friendly by the United States, started slowly but never looked back after Bode headed them in front after 11 minutes.

Ribbeck's side now have six points from their three games in group three, two more than the Irish who have played a game more.

But Turkey are top in Germany's group three, clinching that position with a 2-0 Istanbul win over Moldova.

"Bull of the Bosphorus" Hakan Sukur, whose freak goal earned the historic win over Germany, got the first



Ukrainian midfielder Vitaly Kosssovsky jumps over French midfielder and captain Didier Deschamps at the Stade de France in Saint-Denis, north of Paris, during the 2000 European championship qualifier match between France and Ukraine. The match ended in a draw 0-0 (AFP photo)

after 35 minutes before Yalcin Seren sealed the win in injury time.

England, having lost in Sweden and been unconvincing in drawing at home to Bulgaria and winning in Luxembourg, made a tremendous start with Scholes poking in his first after just 11 minutes and then netting from a David Beckham cross 10 minutes later, albeit with the help of a hand, to put England in control.

The red-headed Manchester United star was then at fault in allowing Jerzy Brzezec to pull one back for the Poles before sealing an important victory 20 minutes from time with a powerful header.

It was Scholes's first top-level hat-trick and he was delighted as he clutched the match ball afterwards.

"It means everything to me," the 24-year-old said. "It's my first senior hat-trick."

France were relieved to escape with a point at home to Ukraine, who missed out on the chance to claim a historic victory at the stadium that the French have already accorded mythical status.

The 80,000 arena has only been open a year but, with the possible exception of their heart-stopping World Cup quarter-final penalty shoot-out win over Italy, France have never come so close to capitulating at their new home.

Certainly Shevchenko will rue his 79th-minute miss.

The Dynamo Kiev striker, rated by many as the most talented young striker in Europe, had sprung the offside trap of the normally impenetrable French defence but fired his shot

straight at Barthez with not a defender in sight.

It was the best chance of a match where France, without their injured playmaker Zinedine Zidane, failed to break down a determined Ukraine, rated as one of the most improved sides in Europe and the group four leaders.

Zidane, watching in the stands, was sorely missed by the world champions, who never managed to produce their usual fluid passing.

Barthez and Shevchenko will be team-mates at AC Milan next year, according to press reports, and Chernobyl survivor Shevchenko will be hoping this match does not come up in conversation.

France coach Roger Lemerre admitted: "This point is a good point. Ukraine has Shevchenko

but we have Barthez."

Russia earlier had chalked up their first points with a 3-0 win over Armenia while Iceland moved level on points with second-placed France, winning 2-0 in Andorra.

Italy tightened their grip on group one with Filippo Inzaghi putting them ahead after only 36 seconds.

Denmark's pressure paid off after 57 minutes when Ebbe Sand levelled but Juventus star Antonio Conte hit the winner 12 minutes later for Dino Zoff's men.

Switzerland won 1-0 in Belarus in the other group one match.

In group six Spain continued their resurgence with an astonishing 9-0 walloping of Austria. Real Madrid striker Raul scored four goals for the Spaniards, who have put their shock defeat by Cyprus behind them.

The team the Germans beat in the 1996 final, the Czech Republic, took command in Group Nine after goals in either half from Michal Horak and Liverpool midfielder Patrik Berger gave them their fourth win in as many games — 2-0 at home to Lithuania.

With second-placed Scotland's home tie against Bosnia having been called off because of the situation in Kosovo, the Czechs grabbed the chance to go a commanding five points clear in their group.

The Lithuanians had arrived unbeaten and hoping to close the gap on the Scots to a single point, but Horak's header and Berger's second-half penalty wrapped up the match.

The Czechs, who have already wrapped up away wins in the Faroe Islands and Bosnia and crushed Estonia, now travel to Scotland for a crunch tie on Wednesday evening.

On Friday, Portugal took pole position in Group Seven with a 7-0 thrashing of hapless Azerbaijan with Joao Pinto and Pauleta both bagging a brace. Hungary thrashed Liechtenstein 5-0.

Portugal have nine points from four games — one more than Romania, who shared a goalless draw with Slovakia in Bucharest.

In group two Manchester United's Ole Gunnar Solskjaer just failed to emulate team-mate Scholes, having to settle for a brace in Norway's 2-0 win against Greece in Athens.

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



15 countries in Arab Paralympics

AMMAN — Fifteen Arab countries have confirmed their participation in the 1st Arab Paralympics which will be held Sept. 9-20 following the 9th Pan-Arab Games. Representatives of participating countries will arrive April 4 to discuss technicalities and meet the Games Director HRH Prince Firas Ben Ra'd. A meeting of the Games' Higher Organising Committee on April 6 will review preparations for the event in which Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Tunisia, Yemen, Palestine, Bahrain, Morocco, Algeria and Jordan will compete. The formation of the sub-committees to prepare for the Games is expected during the meeting.

Wihdat leave for Jericho Tuesday

AMMAN — Al Wihdat's 20-member delegation will leave for Jericho on Tuesday to take part in the 6th Jericho Winter Soccer Championship. Al Wihdat will play the opening match on Friday against hosts — Hilal Club of Jericho in Group 2 which also includes Jerusalem's Jabal Makbar team. Group 1 includes Jordan's Al Faisali, Sour Baher and Tulkarem. The Jordan Football Association gave the go-ahead for both Jordanian teams to take part with their national team players as part of preparations for the Pan-Arab Games — Al Hussein Tournament. The Jericho Championship will be held under the patronage of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. Al Wihdat won the event last year.

Compiled by Ahmad Khatib

Sarajevo wants to host 2010 Winter Games

ZAGREB (AFP) — The city of Sarajevo, which was heavily bombed during the Bosnian war, wants to host the 2010 Winter Olympics.

The president of Bosnia Herzegovina's Olympic Committee, Bogic Bogicevic, told Sunday's edition of the Croat newspaper Jutarnji List that the bid would be officially announced on Tuesday at the scheduled opening ceremony for the rebuilt Zetra sports hall in Sarajevo.

The city hosted the 1984 Winter Olympics, but many facilities including the Zetra hall — used for ice skating events at the games — were destroyed by artillery fire in the 1992-95 conflict in the former Yugoslavia.

"It will not be an easy task because 70 per cent of the sporting facilities in Bosnia are partially or completely destroyed," said Bogicevic.

The International Olympic Committee has contributed \$11.5 million towards the \$17 million cost of rebuilding the Zetra hall.

The opening ceremony had been due to take place last week but was postponed because of the NATO airstrikes over the Kosovo crisis.

GOREN BRIDGE

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♣ K 6 3

The bidding:
SOUTH: 1♣, 2♦, 3♦, 4♦, 5♦, 6♦, 7♦, 8♦, 9♦, 10♦, 11♦, 12♦, 13♦, 14♦, 15♦, 16♦, 17♦, 18♦, 19♦, 20♦, 21♦, 22♦, 23♦, 24♦, 25♦, 26♦, 27♦, 28♦, 29♦, 30♦, 31♦, 32♦, 33♦, 34♦, 35♦, 36♦, 37♦, 38♦, 39♦, 40♦, 41♦, 42♦, 43♦, 44♦, 45♦, 46♦, 47♦, 48♦, 49♦, 50♦, 51♦, 52♦, 53♦, 54♦, 55♦, 56♦, 57♦, 58♦, 59♦, 60♦, 61♦, 62♦, 63♦, 64♦, 65♦, 66♦, 67♦, 68♦, 69♦, 70♦, 71♦, 72♦, 73♦, 74♦, 75♦, 76♦, 77♦, 78♦, 79♦, 80♦, 81♦, 82♦, 83♦, 84♦, 85♦, 86♦, 87♦, 88♦, 89♦, 90♦, 91♦, 92♦, 93♦, 94♦, 95♦, 96♦, 97♦, 98♦, 99♦, 100♦.

Opening lead: Three of ♣

France won the Open Teams event in the Marlboro China Cup and China the Ladies Teams. This deal is from the match between North America and China in the Open division.

For North America, Peter Nagy, North, and Eric Kokish, South, reached four hearts on the auction shown. All we know about the bidding is that North's one no trump was forcing and South's double showed a better-than-minimum opening bid. Thus the normal contract of four hearts was reached in a rather convoluted manner.

West led the three of diamonds against four hearts, and declarer was delighted with the contract. It seemed that the contract was impracticable, indeed, if the heart finesse succeeded, an overtrick was likely. That soon changed.

For China, Shi Huijun won the trick with the queen of diamonds and returned a low diamond. When the jack won East, Dai Jianming, had no problem finding the winning defense. He shifted to a club. East ruffed and, since the trump finesse was destined to lose, the contract failed by a trick.

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Ethiopia says Eritrea lost 45,000 in border battles

ADDIS ABABA (R) — Ethiopia said on Sunday that it had killed, wounded or captured more than 45,000 Eritrean troops and destroyed 77 tanks in border battles since Feb. 23.

Ethiopia's assessment of Eritrean losses in the latest fighting between the two Horn of Africa countries gave no figures for its own losses.

Eritrea says its forces killed thousands of Ethiopians in the Badme region earlier this month. It too has given no figures for its own losses.

"Eritrean President Isayas Afewerki reassembled his fragmented and defeated army, and moved troops from other fronts in a desperate bid to try and regain Badme," Ethiopian government spokeswoman Selome Tadesse said in a statement.

"More than 45,000 enemy troops have been killed, wounded or captured, 77 tanks have been destroyed and 19 others captured, with hundreds of mortars, anti-aircraft and anti-tank

weapons.

"Two MiG-29 planes were downed, food and ammunition supply depots seized in a series of battles fought against the Eritrean army between Feb. 23 and March 26," Selome said.

Eritrea had been driven out of Badme in a three-day battle, named Operation Sunset, between Feb. 23 and 26.

There was no independent confirmation of the Ethiopian claims.

The conflict between the two Horn of Africa neighbours broke out last May and erupted again in February after an uneasy eight-month lull.

Ethiopia last year accepted a proposal from the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) which calls on Eritrea to withdraw its troops from occupied Ethiopian territory along the border.

Eritrea says it accepts the OAU plan and has called for an immediate ceasefire, but Ethiopia says Eritrea must first withdraw its forces from all occupied territory.



CELEBRATING 'EID: Jordanians have fun at an amusement park in Amman on Saturday, the first day of 'Eid Al Adha, or feast of sacrifice. The four-day 'Eid marks the end of the annual pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia, one of the five pillars of Islam (AFP photo)

Netanyahu slams Israeli press over campaign coverage, accuses reporters of siding with Barak

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu issued a vitriolic attack against the Israeli press, accusing reporters in remarks broadcast Sunday of siding with opposition leader Ehud Barak in the campaign for May elections.

"There is an army of journalists who have enlisted for Barak," Netanyahu thundered during a meeting of leaders from his rightist Likud Party late Saturday.

"I read the newspapers this weekend — not all of them because there is a limit

to how much a person can tolerate — there are thousands of words there, disparaging, defamatory and abusive," he said. The remarks were broadcast by Israeli radio.

"The media has to be attacked more, don't believe a single word you read there, unless it's favourable to us," Netanyahu counselled his troops.

Netanyahu has always railed against the Israeli press, accusing it of a leftist and elitist bias against him.

But his anger boiled over at the weekend following an

investigative report in the country's biggest circulation daily, the Yediot Aharonot, on the financing of his election campaign by a right-wing Australian billionaire, Yosef Gutnik.

On Sunday the Yediot reported that Attorney General Eliyahu Rubinstein was considering ordering a police investigation into the financial ties between Netanyahu's

entourage and Gutnik, an ultra-Orthodox Jew who supports ultra-nationalist causes in Israel.

Last week the press

revealed that Gutnik, at the request of Netanyahu's wife Sarah, had recently purchased a bankrupt business owned by the former kindergarten teacher of the Netanyahu's children.

In Saturday's speech, Netanyahu called the Yediot Aharonot "the official organ of Ehud Barak."

Netanyahu's outburst appeared to reflect growing unease over the lacklustre start of the Likud's election campaign.

The prime minister himself is trailing behind Barak in opinion surveys while

internal Likud polls reportedly show that the public has not taken to the party's campaign themes.

Netanyahu's attack on the media was made at the start of a meeting between Likud candidates and the prime minister's American public relations guru, Arthur Finkelstein, who was reportedly called to Jerusalem to breathe new life into the campaign.

Likud officials have scheduled a press conference for Sunday to unveil a new series of campaign slogans.

Christians mark beginning of holy week in Jerusalem

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — At one point during the Palm Sunday Mass in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, worshippers

turned and wished each other "peace" in at least seven different languages.

About 100 Christians, many holding palm fronds, stood on either side of the raised stone platform under the basilica, as the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Michel Sabbah conducted the mass with the assistance of red-robed priests.

The worshippers came from all over the world — the Holy Land, North America, Europe and the Far East — and stood shoulder to shoulder in front of the tall, ornate wooden structure that represents the tomb of Jesus.

Their palm fronds represented the triumphal entry

of Jesus into Jerusalem, commemorating the palm branches laid in his path by his followers.

There are no pews in the middle of the fourth-century church built on the traditional site of calvary, where Jesus took his last few steps before crucifixion.

On Palm Sunday 1999, there was plenty of room in the church.

Next year, the millennium, might be a different story, worried Franciscan Fr. Paul Silvestre, who has been here for six years.

It would take only about five hundred people to fill the area around the basilica. Next year, "we are afraid that it will be so packed that it will be hard to move, but we hope that everyone will fit in," he told the Associated Press.

NATO broadens attacks

(Continued from page 1)

In a separate twist, a gun battle broke out in front of the U.S. embassy in Moscow, where anti-NATO demonstrators have been staging daily protests to show solidarity with the Serbs (see story on page 4).

NATO said 66 aircraft, in two waves, attacked 17 Yugoslav targets on Saturday night, the fourth night of bombing. Despite the first ever loss of a U.S. Stealth plane in combat, U.S. President Bill Clinton said the raids would continue.

The British and German defence ministers accused Yugoslav forces of committing genocide in Kosovo.

"The information that we are receiving indicates that these troops are starting to commit genocide and we must prevent that," Germany's Rudolf Scharping said.

His British counterpart, George Robertson, confirmed the next phase of bombing would focus on those units responsible for bloody reprisals against Kosovo Albanians in recent days.

"We are now concentrating our attention on the specific groups of people who are terrorising, who are obliterating villages, torturing and maiming," he said.

Britain would more than double its contribution of warplanes to the NATO mission — from eight to 20, plus a refuelling tanker. It would also allow more U.S. B-52 bombers, armed with cruise

missiles, to operate from British soil.

NATO Secretary General Javier Solana said the alliance was not planning to send ground troops into Kosovo at present, but did not rule out that option — fraught with grave political risks for NATO governments — in future.

Several blasts rocked Belgrade on the fifth day of the NATO strikes and air-raids sirens wailed from early morning. The official news agency Tanjug said missiles landed near two airports in the suburbs.

All clear sirens were sounded six hours later — competing in Belgrade with an outdoor rock concert, organised under the slogan "Songs keep us alive and united." But fresh air raid alerts were heard around 1450 GMT.

U.S. Balkan envoy Richard Holbrooke said there was "no change" in the American position that had led to the bombings.

He was speaking in Budapest after meeting three leading Russian liberal politicians who argued for a halt to the raids and warned they could trigger a new cold war.

Yugoslav strongman Milosevic, slamming NATO's "military despotism," has remained defiant in his refusal to accept a peace deal that would grant autonomy to Kosovo.

Several unconfirmed massacre reports have emerged from the province since the NATO raids started.

Palestinians indifferent to Israeli election

By Wafa Amr Reuters

RAMALLAH — While other Palestinians at his upside down cafe nodded in agreement, Hanna Al Basir said that no matter who won the Israeli election on May 17, he believed Palestinians would surely lose.

"We don't care which of the candidates wins and we don't care which party rules Israel. They are two faces of the same coin. None of them is good for the Palestinians," said 40-year-old Basir between sips of coffee and puffs on a water pipe.

His customers, all in their 20s, voiced similar indifference to the hotly contested race between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his challengers.

While Palestinian political and intellectual circles view the left-leaning Labour Party as better for peacekeeping than Netanyahu's rightist Likud, average Palestinians cite bad memories of Israeli governments left and right.

Opinion polls show a majority don't care about political changes in the Jewish state next door. They don't vote — and no matter who wins, they believe the outcome will be bad for them.

When PLO Chief Yasser Arafat and then-Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin shook hands at the White House in 1993, ending decades of bloodshed and hostility, Palestinians had hoped occupation would end within five years in independence and economic prosperity.

But peace moves were

interrupted by Israeli reluctance to cede West Bank land and Muslim militant suicide attacks against Israel. Netanyahu halted a promised transfer of more land in December, accusing Palestinians of violating peace deals.

No benefits from left or right

Netanyahu's two main challengers are former Army Chief Ehud Barak, leader of the left-centre Labour Party, and former Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, head of the new Centre Party.

"Palestinians are indifferent because their overall conditions have not improved under either government and they have not reaped peace benefits under both governments," said political analyst Ghassan Al Khatib.

Netanyahu ousted Labour leader Shimon Peres as prime minister in 1996. Peres had succeeded Labour's Rabin, who was slain in November 1995 by a right-wing Jew opposed to ceding land-for-peace with the Arabs.

Though Israel handed back parts of occupied land to the Palestinian National Authority it maintained control of the majority of the West Bank. Jewish settler enclaves dot the West Bank and in places surround Palestinian towns and villages.

Palestinian officials said Israel was swallowing up large chunks of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip — territories captured by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war — for a network of bypass roads linking the settler enclaves.

"The only difference we experienced after peace was that we did not see Israeli soldiers on our streets in our cities any more, but they still erected checkpoints outside them and we still felt the ugly face of occupation," said 45-year-old Mohammad Mansour, who works in a children's shop.

Some 170,000 Jews live in settlements scattered among the nearly three million Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza.

Palestinians largely indifferent

Basir said he planned to move from his village, Taibeh, still under Israeli control, to Palestinian-controlled Ramallah to avoid daily harassment by Israeli soldiers at checkpoints on the roads.

"The harassment did not stop under Likud or Labour. The three Jewish settlements surrounding Taibeh expanded under both governments and our economic conditions deteriorated under Likud and Labour," the cafe owner said.

A February survey of 1,201 West Bank and Gaza Palestinians, conducted by the Jerusalem Media Centre and Communications (JMCC), found a majority of Palestinians indifferent to who won the election.

It found that 30.2 per cent favoured Labour headed by Barak, 9.5 per cent the Centre Party headed by Mordechai and 7.8 per cent Likud led by Netanyahu. But 52.5 per cent said it did not concern them, they didn't know or had no answer.

PKK claims responsibility for bombing

ISTANBUL (AFP) — The Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) on Sunday claimed responsibility for a suicide attack in a busy Istanbul square, thwarting PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan's efforts to present himself as a peacemaker in the run-up to his trial.

The pro-Kurdish news agency DEM quoted the Kurdistan People's Liberation Army (ARGL), the PKK's armed wing, as saying that the suicide bomber was a member of an ARGL women's unit.

It was the first time the PKK had taken responsibility for a bombing after a deadly series of attacks in Istanbul since Ocalan's arrest last month.

Ten people were wounded and the attacker killed at Taksim Square in the heart of Istanbul on Saturday, when the bomber triggered several hand grenades stashed in her backpack.

Fourteen people were killed in earlier bombings in Istanbul over the past few weeks. The PKK denied responsibility for those attacks.

The PKK bombing at Taksim Square came shortly after Ocalan issued a "peace message" to Turkey from the prison island of Imrali, where he is awaiting trial on treason charges.

In the message delivered by his lawyers, Ocalan said he hoped for "a solution of unity, peace and brotherhood between Kurds and Turks on the basis of a democratic republic."

It was Ocalan's second conciliatory message to the Turkish public in 10 days, in what was seen as a preview of his defence strategy for the trial on charges of terrorism and treason.

In both messages, Ocalan reminded the public that he had offered Turkey ceasefires on three occasions before his capture and imprisonment in February.

Ocalan also said he disapproved of the recent bombings.

The Taksim bombing was seen as a possible setback to such efforts, and implied a possible split between the armed and political wings of the PKK.

The PKK central committee and the ARGL command issued several harsh warnings to Turkey after Ocalan's arrest, and threatened to turn the whole country into a "war zone."

But the rebels carefully distanced themselves from the string of bombings that hit Istanbul after these warnings.

"This is not the PKK's style. The PKK would not do such a thing," ARGL commander Osman Ocalan, brother of the PKK leader, said after a particularly bloody attack on an Istanbul department store earlier this month.

Sources close to the PKK have suggested that individuals and groups within the organisation may act on their own in the bombings.

But deep divisions within the PKK leadership over the tactical value of terrorism had already become apparent before Ocalan's arrest.

In a speech on the Kurdish satellite station Med-TV in November, Ocalan attacked the ARGL commanders as "not much better than common murderers."

And Ocalan himself, while still at liberty, frequently saw-sawed between threats of violence and pleas for peace in his weekly addresses on Med-TV.

Hacker pleads guilty to fraud

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — A celebrated hacker has pleaded guilty to charges of computer fraud under the terms of a deal reached with federal prosecutors, officials said. Under the agreement Kevin Mitnick, 33, could be free in one year. U.S. prosecutors said Friday. At one time the FBI's most wanted computer hacker, Mitnick is charged with penetrating the systems of Motorola, Sun Microsystems, Fujitsu, NEC and Finnish mobile phone company Nokia. He was arrested by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in February 1995 after three years of investigation. He was able to obtain — or tried to obtain — software worth several million dollars, authorities said. His trial was to have begun on April 20. Under the deal to be formally approved on June 14, Mitnick has agreed to pay his victims any profits he receives from books or films about his exploits. He is also forbidden to touch a computer for the next three years.

Weather Channel not liable for bad forecast

MIAMI (R) — A U.S. judge has ruled that weather forecasts are predictions and broadcasters should not be blamed if they are wrong, dismissing a \$10 million lawsuit filed by relatives of a Florida fisherman who died in a storm. The lawsuit said the Weather Channel, an Atlanta-based cable channel, contributed to the death of Charles Cobb, 58, by failing to update a forecast of good weather when it learned a storm front was on the way. But U.S. District Judge James Paine ruled on March 18 that Cobb's family sought a "novel and unprecedented expansion of the scope of tort law" and called a weather forecast a "prediction of indeterminate reliability." If the court held forecasters accountable, "the duty could extend to farmers who plant their crops based on a forecast of no rain, construction workers who pour concrete or lay foundation based on the forecast of dry weather, or families who got to the beach for the weekend," Paine wrote in his ruling.

Parachute daredevil arrested

NEW YORK (R) — The elusive daredevil accused of parachuting off New York City's tallest buildings finally landed Friday — in police custody. Thor Alex Kappfjell, of Norway, was arrested at a midtown Manhattan hotel, along with his cousin and a photographer whom police say helped the 32-year-old Kappfjell with his stunts.

Kappfjell parachuted off one of the World Trade Center twin towers Thursday, police said. Last year, he jumped off the 86th-floor observation deck of the Empire State Building on Oct. 24 and the 61st floor of the Chrysler Building three days later. Police arrested him on a tip, said police spokeswoman Carmen Melendez.

Publisher drops Monica book over Kosovo

MOSCOW (R) — The Russian publisher of Monica Lewinsky's biography said Friday it had dropped the project because of anti-American fury unleashed by NATO strikes on Yugoslavia. "The situation in the Balkans makes it impossible," said Anna Sklyarskaya of publisher Vagrius. She quoted the company's spokeswoman, Tatyana Makarova, as saying: "The relationship of people, both her and to the leadership of the country, has changed. We don't think people will properly accept her." Vagrius had said last month it would bring former White House intern Lewinsky's book to market in the summer for launch of its translation of the authorised biography "Monica's Story." Other Russians have shared the government's outrage at the strikes on Yugoslavia.

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